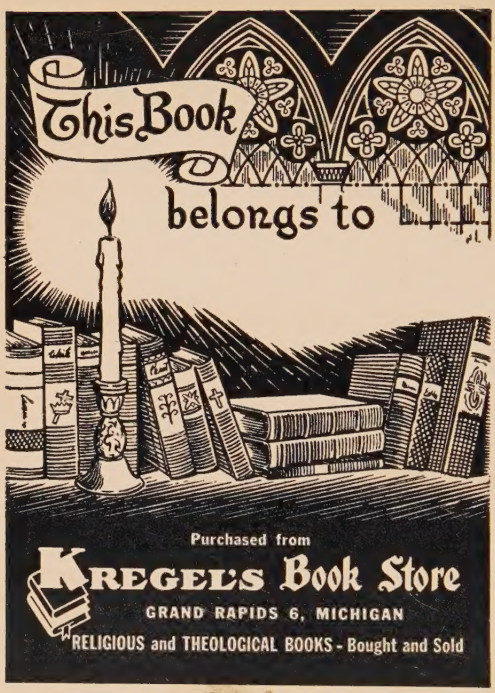
FOOTSTEPS IN THE PATH OF LIFE

MARCUS DODS D.D.



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FOOTSTEPS IN THE PATH OF LIFE

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MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS FOR EVERY SUNDAY IN THE YEAR

BY

MARCUS DODS, D.D.

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FIRST SUNDAY

SEEKING

"I would seek unto God."—Job v. 8.

"The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh Him."—Lamentations iii. 25.

THERE are men who set out with the inborn conviction or instinct that there *is* something worth seeking, worth the labour and the search of a life, something which will abundantly repay us, and to which we can wholly, freely, and eternally give ourselves up, and on which we shall delight to spend our whole strength and capabilities. Such a man refuses to be satisfied with the moderate, often interrupted, and often quenched joys of life. He considers physical health, the respect of his fellow-men, a good education, good social position, and so forth,

as all goodly pearls, but he is not going to sit down satisfied with these things if there is anything better to be had. He refuses to have anything short of the best. He goes on from one acquirement to another. Money is good, he at first thinks, but knowledge is better: he parts with the one to get the other. Friendship is good, but love is better, and he cannot satisfy himself with the one but must have the other. The respect of his fellows is good, but self-respect and a pure conscience are better. Human love is a goodly pearl, but this only quickens him insatiably for the love of God. He must always have what is beyond and best. He believes that God has not created us to be partially satisfied, happy at intervals, content with efforts, *believing* ourselves blessed, disguising the reality of our condition by the aid of fancy, or fleeing from it on the wings of hope, but to be partakers of His own blessedness, and to enjoy eternally the sufficiency of Him in whom are all things.

PRAYER

O God, we thank Thee for this life, with all its joys, its opportunities, its discipline. But we could scarcely thank Thee for this life had we no hope of a better, in which all we here learn may be used, and in which all we have here loved may be fully enjoyed. Increase our faith, and give us a more lively apprehension of the reality of things unseen, a firmer assurance that life is not a vain and fruitless spending of time, that there is a purpose in it, the attainment of which will justify all toil, and sacrifice, and thought, and feeling.

SECOND SUNDAY

CHRIST THE WAY

"Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us."—JOHN xiv. 8.
"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."—JOHN xiv. 6.

IT is to the Father that Christ is the Way. And He is the Way, by being the Truth and the Life. It was the *truth* He came into the world to be witness to. He saw as plainly as we see that to venture our eternal hope on His word is not easy. And yet He answered promptly and with authority the questions which have employed the lifetime of many and baffled them in the end. He answered them as if they were the very alphabet of knowledge. These alarmed and perturbed disciples ask Him, "Is there a life beyond? Is there another side of death?" "Yes," He says, "through death I go to the

Father." "Is there," they ask, "for us also a life beyond? Shall such creatures as we find sufficient and suitable habitation and welcome when we pass from this warm, well-known world?" "In My Father's house," He says, "are many mansions." Confronted with the problems that most deeply exercise the human spirit, He, without faltering, pronounces upon them. For every question which our most anxious and trying experiences dictate He has the ready and sufficient answer, "I am the Truth."

He says, not merely, "I speak the truth," but "I am the Truth." In His person and work we find all truth that it is essential to know. He is the true Man, the revelation of perfect manhood, in whom we see what human life truly is. In His own history He shows us our own capacities and our own destiny. An angel or an inanimate law might *tell* us the truth about human life, but Christ is the Truth. He is a man like ourselves. If we are extinguished at death, so is He. If for us there is no future life, neither is there for Him. He is Himself human.

To whom can we come but unto Thee? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life. We thank Thee, O God, that Thou hast revealed Thyself to us in Christ Jesus, that He has come to show us that it is eternal life to know Thee, the Father, and to trust Thee even as He trusted Thee, and to lift us up into His own filial fellowship with Thee. He has said, "Whoso hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and we would be sharers in the blessedness of those who have not seen and yet have believed, who can say from the heart, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

THIRD SUNDAY

GOD THE FATHER

"Thou art my Father, my God."—PSALM lxxxix. 26.
"Abba, Father."—MARK xiv. 36.

"No less than Thee, O Father, do we need,
A God to friend each lonely one of us."

IT was for Christ the Son to give us this liberty of calling God "our Father." There is something more here than the mere acknowledgment of God as our Creator and Keeper. By Christ we are lifted to quite a new level and rank before God. The Creator is included in the Father, but in the Father we have, over and above, the assurance that our connection with Him is one of love and of lasting relationship; that we shall not be suffered to go adrift, but shall be brought up

into His likeness, and live with Him; and that the ground on which this is established is one of unutterable dignity, the Son of God having become our Brother, our nature being now worn by the same Person who wears the nature of God. If, therefore, we do not acknowledge Christ in saying "our Father," this epithet is either profane, misty, or heathenish. The heathen called God, Father, seeing the goodness but not understanding the majesty of Him on whom they called. And there is among ourselves a confused idea of the love of God, and of His desire to bless us, which seems to justify our calling God as by a figure "our Father." But it is no such confused and delusive figure that Christ sets before us, but a reality. It is a fact accomplished, that God has become man; a present reality, that God is man. The Son of God has become Son of Man, and for this very purpose, that we might receive the adoption of sons, that we might claim the same Father as Christ claims.

PRAYER

We thank Thee for Thy goodness in making us capable of becoming Thy children, and for Him who has redeemed us and shown us the path of life. Enable us to judge of Thy government, its holiness, its wisdom, its benignity, its glory, by this meeting of God with man in Christ Jesus. Enable us to estimate Thy character by it, and to judge what we may expect of Thee by what Thou hast already done for us in Christ.

FOURTH SUNDAY

GOD THE FATHER

"No man cared for my soul. I cried unto Thee, O Lord."—PSALM cxlii. 4.

"Yet possessing every blessing,
If our God our Father be."

OUR relationship to God has been established; the Elder Brother of our race calls God, Father; and, irrespective of all that may result from it, this relationship is satisfying to man. Our natures are bound to that of God in the person of Christ, and as long as that Person remains undestroyed we remain related to God. There is, of course, no earthly relationship which fully sets forth this our connection with God. It is a separate singular reality, and it must be conceived of separately in its own reality. Other relationships

may help us to understand it; but while it is only considered under earthly figures, we are in danger of forgetting that underneath there lies the substantial reality of our sonship; and this, instead of being less true than earthly relationships, is the one relationship which, when a man enters into, he ceases to be homeless and a wanderer, a fugitive and vagabond upon the face of the earth, and from the face of God—ceases to be a mere withered leaf borne helpless on the wind, whose origin none cares to trace, and whose destiny none turns to see; he has found his place in the universe, he has found a hold and a hope, and, however in himself unstable, weak, and incapable, he rests enduringly in the unchangeable Father. He has been outside, thinking the world a strange, cold, barren, friendless, and unsatisfying place; he has wandered about, not seeing through the thick cloud, and still less dreaming that One was seeing and caring for him, and now he finds he has a Father—One to love, One to serve, One to glorify, One to worship.

Save us from finding hollowness in our own hearts, and monotony and weariness in our lives. Give us the liberty of the sons of God, perfectly to approve of Thee and Thy will, to be wholly satisfied with the dominion under which we are, and to delight in all that is required of us, knowing we serve our Father. Give us the joy of those who are conscious they have found and need never more lose perfect love and perfect goodness.

FIFTH SUNDAY

GOD THE FATHER

"Our Father which art in Heaven."—MATTHEW vi. 9.

"Father of heaven, whose love profound
A ransom for our souls hath found."

IS it so sacred a ground as this that we are to tread in each day's ordinary approach to God? No other path is open. The only prayer our Lord will teach begins "Our Father." These words it is easy to use in the figurative sense, but this sense wins us nothing. It goes round, like a thief or a robber seeking another entrance to the favour of God than the door that He has Himself opened in Christ, and therefore it brings us no nearer God, but only misleads us. And there is no need that we seek for

another entrance, for the door is wide enough. If we say that we are born of woman as Christ was "born of a woman" then His Father owns us. There is no man who may not use this prayer, for the title does not lie in the petitioner but in Christ.

But these words may be abused. A man may shrink from this holy relationship and yet call upon God. Of course he gains nothing by it. God knows who come to Him through Christ, and who only name the name of Christ. But we may deceive ourselves, and therefore we are to listen to conscience, which tells us that a likeness is expected between father and child. Such an assimilation Christ supposes when He says, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, *that ye may be the children* of your Father which is in heaven." But as the earthly parent feels a new bond to his child when the child in its first efforts at language, calls upon him and claims him as his father, so the first movement of the Spirit of Holiness within the child of God

teaches him to cry, "Abba, Father," and imperfectly though it be spoken, God hails it as the sign of holiness begun and as the earnest of likeness to Himself.

Prayer

We are ashamed that we should have cared so little for these spirits of ours for which Thou hast cared so constantly and tenderly and sacrificed so dearly. We have not been diligent in the use of the means Thou hast provided, and when we have, we have often trusted more to them than to Thy Spirit. Give us, we beseech Thee, the heart of children, that we may trust Thee utterly and believe that Thy Spirit is able to bring us to live a life like unto Thine.

SIXTH SUNDAY

GOD THE FATHER

"Our God is in the heavens."—PSALM cxv. 3.

"He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased."—PSALM cxxxv. 6.

"Oh little heart of mine! shall pain
Or sorrow make thee moan,
When all this God is all for Thee,
A Father all thine own!"

FROM the darkness of earth we pray to Him who is the light of heaven; and from the confusion of earth and its perplexity we pray to Him who sits above, seeing to the end and ordering all things; from the trouble and weakness of earth we cry up to the blessed and only Potentate, God over all blessed for evermore. This is our comfort, that while we are involved in this world we can appeal to One who is above it and un-

controlled by it. Our prayer will not proceed in faith until we raise God high above us and all that we know, to the very supreme of power. When the utmost skill and strength of the child have failed, he runs to his father, never doubting that with him is more skill and sufficient strength. And we must learn to cease from measuring the power of God by our own, and reasoning from the one to the other. We must learn to set God above His own laws, not that He will reverse them, but use them as we know not how. We are not to think that where we see no possibility God sees none, that when all human skill has been fruitlessly spent there is no more that God can do; that when everything goes wrong with us, and we are ready to sit down and wait for ruin, there is no help for us in God. Too often we pray to a God whom we do not set in the heavens, to whom we do not, in fact, ascribe as much wisdom and power as we do to men, whom we scarcely trust in much more than in ourselves, else we would not be found

despairing when we see no remedy for our ills and when our own strength is exhausted.

Prayer

We thank Thee that Thy greatness does not separate Thee from Thy creatures, but makes Thee more their own. Thou hast said that we glorify Thee when we call upon Thee in the day of trouble; and we believe that all our trouble is known to Thee and will be guided by Thee to issues that Thou wilt bless. Make us strong in faith, believing that Thou art with us, sufficient for all our hourly need. Rebuke our fears—may we feel that in Thee and in Thy presence is fulness of joy, and that Thou goest with us, caring most for the weakest, who can least stand alone.

SEVENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."—JOHN i. 14.

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find."

THE process of the Incarnation John describes very simply. The Jews were familiar with the idea of God dwelling with His people. By the word John here uses he links the body of Christ to the ancient dwelling of God round which the tents of Israel had clustered. God now dwelt among men in the humanity of Jesus Christ. The tabernacle was human, the indwelling Person was Divine. In Christ is realised the actual presence of God among His people, the actual entrance into and personal participation in

human history which was hinted at in the tabernacle and the temple.

In the Incarnation, then, we have God's response to man's craving to find, to see, to know Him. To suppose that God might make Himself more obvious, more distinctly apparent to us than He has done, is to mistake what God is and how we can know Him. What are the highest attributes of Divinity, the most Divine characteristics of God? Are they great power, a dazzling physical glory that overpowers the sense, or are they infinite goodness, holiness that cannot be tempted, love that accommodates itself to all the needs of all creatures? Surely the latter, the spiritual and moral, qualities are the more Divine. Only through what is personal, only through what is like ourselves, only through what is moral, can God reveal Himself to us. It is in Christ we see upon our own earth, and in circumstances we can examine and understand, *goodness*—goodness tried by every test conceivable, goodness triumphant. This goodness, though in human forms and circum-

stances, is yet the goodness of One who comes among men from a higher sphere, teaching, forgiving, commanding, assuring, saving, as One sent to deal with men rather than springing from them. If this is not God, what is God? What do we need in God, or suppose to be in God, which we have not in Christ?

Prayer

We desire, O God, to glorify Christ as Him by Whom Thou hast blessed us, Who is our only and all-sufficient hope, Who has made a sacrifice worthy of eternal praise, Who has borne the weight of a world's woe, and Who has been in this world the Bearer and the Healer of its misery, the Conqueror of sin, and Who is now exalted at Thy right hand, the one Saviour to whom it is owing that we are saved.

EIGHTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

"Himself took our infirmities."—MATTHEW viii. 17.

"When He lived on earth abased,
Friend of sinners was His name;
Now above all glory raised,
He rejoices in the same."

OUR first thought of God must ever be that which the Incarnation suggests: that the God with whom alone and in all things we have to do is not One who is alienated from us, or who has no sympathy with us, or who is absorbed in interests very different from ours, and to which we must be sacrificed; but that He is One who sacrifices Himself for us, and who makes all things but justice and right bend to serve us, who for-

gives our misapprehensions, our coldness, our unspeakable folly, and makes common cause with us in all that concerns our welfare. Still with Divine patience does He wait till we recognise Him as our Friend, and humbly own Him as our God. He waits till we learn that to be God is not to be a mighty King enthroned above all the assaults of His creatures, but that to be God is to have more love than all besides; to be able to make greater sacrifices for the good of all; to have an infinite capacity to humble Himself, to put Himself out of sight, and to consider our good. This is the God we have in Christ; our Judge becoming our atoning Victim, our God becoming our Father, the Infinite One coming with all His helpfulness into the most intimate relations with us; is this not a God to whom we can trust ourselves and whom we can love and serve? If this is the real nature of God, if to be God is to be all this as full of love in the future as He has shown Himself in the past, then may not existence yet be that perfect

joy our instincts crave, and towards which we are slowly and doubtfully finding our way through all the darkness, and strains and shocks that are needed to sift what is spiritual in us from what is unworthy?

Prayer

We thank Thee, O God, for the solace, and strength, and help Thou bringest to our hearts by giving us to know Thee and to lean upon Thee. We thank Thee that Thou hast promised to be with us through our life, sufficient for all our necessities, able to bring us through all temptation, waiting patiently till we recognise Thy goodness and learn to love Thee. We thank Thee for Him through whom Thou hast revealed Thyself, and we pray that, being constrained by His love, we may be conformed more to His image.

NINTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

"It is finished."—JOHN xix. 30.

"O Father, Thou art my eternity.
Not on the clasp of consciousness—on Thee
My heart depends."

THE purpose of God in the history of man was accomplished when Jesus breathed His last upon the cross. The cry "It is finished" was not the mere gasp of a worn-out life; it was not the cry of satisfaction with which a career of pain and sorrow is terminated; it was the deliberate utterance of a clear consciousness on the part of God's appointed Revealer that now all had been done that could be done to make God known to men and to identify Him with men. God's purpose had ever been one and indivisible—

declared to men in various ways, a hint here, a broad light there, now by a gleam of insight in the mind of a prophet, now by a deed of heroism in king or leader, through rude symbolic contrivances and through the tenderest of human affections and the highest human thoughts. God had been making men ever more and more sensible that His one purpose was to come closer and closer into fellowship with them, and to draw them into a perfect harmony with Him. Forgiveness and deliverance from sin were provided for them, knowledge of God's law and will, that they might learn to know and to serve Him —all these were secured when Jesus cried, "It is finished."

When John had seen and pondered the words and the life of Jesus all his ideas of the Father were altered. He learned that God is love, and that to infinite love while there remains one thing to give, one step of nearness to the loved to be taken, love has not its perfect expression. It came upon him as a revelation that God was really in the world.

PRAYER

O God, we thank Thee for Thy word of truth, and we pray Thee to enlarge our thoughts of Thee and of Thy purpose. We thank thee that for us Thou hast a purpose of good, that for us there is a Saviour who has loved us, and given Himself for us. We thank Thee that through Christ Jesus we have forgiveness of sins, that He gave Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and that our hope rests on the finished work of our Redeemer.

TENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."—JOHN xii. 32.

"Oh love of God! Oh sin of man!
In this dread act your strength is tried."

THAT which has made the cross the most significant of earthly symbols, and which has invested it with so wonderful a power to subdue and purify the heart, is not the fact that it involved the keenest physical pain, but that it exhibits Christ's perfect and complete identification with sinful men. It is this that humbles us and brings us to a right mind towards God and towards sin, that here we see the innocent Son of God involved in suffering and undergoing a shameful death through our sin. Who shall measure the

burden Christ bore from day to day in the midst of a sinning and suffering world? The mere sorrows of men doubtless affected Him more than they affect the most tender-hearted of men; but these sorrows—poverty, failure, sickness—would pass away, and would even work for good, and so might well be borne. But when He saw them day by day defeating the purpose He lived to accomplish, and undoing the only work He thought worth doing—who can measure the burden of shame and grief He had to bear?

But it is not the suffering that does us good and brings us to God, but the love which underlies the suffering. The suffering convinces us that it is love which prompts Christ in all His life and death—a love we may confidently trust to, since it staggered at no difficulty or sacrifice; a love which aims at lifting and helping us; a love that embraces us, not seeking to accomplish only one thing for us, but necessarily, because it is love for us, seeking our good in all things. The power of earthly love we know. Let it not enter

our thoughts that He who is more closely related to us than any, and who will far less disclaim this relationship, does not love us in practical ways, and cannot fit us by His loving care for all that His holiness requires.

Prayer

May we be really one with Christ, not in name only, but in love. And as His life was shaped by His love for us and union with us, so may ours be lived in conformity with His blessed life. May we be enabled to believe that we can be as truly nourished by Christ's life as each member is by the life of the body, and may we be able to say, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

ELEVENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

"Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping."—JOHN xx. 11.

> "A broken heart, a fount of tears,
> Ask, and they will not be denied."

IN the story of Mary at the sepulchre we have a picture of a real and profound grief, and therefore of a real and profound love. And to Mary our Lord remembered His promise: "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." None is so unable as He to leave any who love Him without any response to their expressions of affection. He could not coldly look on while this woman was eagerly seeking Him; and it is as impossible that He should hide Himself now from any who

seek Him with as true a heart. Sometimes it would seem as if real thirst for God were not at once allayed, as if many were allowed to spend the best part of their days in seeking; but this does not invalidate the promise, "He that seeketh findeth."

Mary standing without weeping is a concrete representative of a not uncommon state of mind. She stands wondering why she was ever so foolish, so heartless, as to leave the tomb at all. It is thus that those who have been careless about maintaining communion with Christ reproach themselves when they find He is gone. The ordinances, the prayers, the quiet hours of contemplation that once were filled with Him are now like the linen clothes and the napkin, empty, cold, pale forms of His presence that make His absence all the more painful. And yet this self-reproach is itself a seeking to which He will respond. To mourn His absence is to desire and to invite His presence, and to invite His presence is to secure it.

PRAYER

Deliver us, O God, from all that makes us shun Thy presence, and clear, heart-cleansing dealing with Thee. Maintain upon our spirits we beseech Thee, a solemnising and encouraging sense of Thy nearness. Thou knowest how often we have deceived ourselves with forms, how we have passed through the richest spiritual provision and the most gracious services without profit. Settle in our souls a steady belief of all Thy love to sinners, and an affectionate reliance on the merit and mediation of Thy crucified Son and of our being accepted in Him.

TWELFTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils."—MARK xvi. 9.

"Drop Thy warm blood upon my heart,
And melt me by Thy dying grace."

THE Evangelist Mark means apparently to suggest that those who have most need of encouragement from Christ are surest to get it. The sense of need is what always effectually appeals to Him. The soul that truly recognises the value and longs for the fellowship and possession of Christ's purity, devotion to God, superiority to worldly aims and interests, always wins His regard. When a man prays for these things, not with his lips only, but with his life's effort and his heart's craving, his prayer is answered.

For Christ rose, not that He might bring ecstasy to Mary alone, but that He might fill all things with His presence and His fulness, and that our joy also may be full. Has He not called us also by name? Do we envy Mary her few minutes in the garden? As truly as by the audible utterance of our name does Christ now invite us to the perfect joy there is in His friendship, so truly as if our name alone filled His lips, our wants alone occupied His heart. Let us not miss true personal intercourse with Christ. Let nothing cheat us of this supreme joy and life of the soul. Let us not slothfully or shyly say, "I can never be on such terms of intimacy with Christ—I who am so unlike Him, so full of desires He cannot gratify, so unable to keep a pure and elevated purpose steadfastly in my mind." Mary was once trodden under foot of evil, a wreck in whom none but Christ saw any place for hope. It is what is in *Him* that is powerful. He has won and maintains His supremacy by love, teaching all to love Him, subduing to devotedness the hardest

heart—not by a remote exhibition of cold, unemotional perfection, but by the persistence and depth of His warm individual love.

Prayer

O Lord, we desire to thank Thee for the glad and hopeful thoughts with which we may come into Thy presence, for the change which has been wrought in our life by the coming of Christ, for the perfect life He sets before us, and the lifting up of our thoughts to Thee. When we begin to wonder if for us there is any real fellowship with Thee, any true possibility of our finding joy in holiness and self-sacrifice, enable us to believe in the reality and efficiency of Christ's salvation, and may we be willing to open our whole nature to His love.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

"Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father."—JOHN xx. 17.

"Help us in this time of waiting
In Thy strength to follow Thee."

CHRIST must ascend to the Father, and those who love Him on earth must learn to live without the physical appearance, the actual seeing, touching, hearing of the well-known Master. There must be no more kissing of His feet, but homage of a sterner, deeper sort; there must be no more sitting at table with Him, and filling the mind with His words, until they sit down with Him in His Father's presence. Meanwhile His friends must walk by faith, not by sight. Thus only can the human spirit freely grow; thus only can its

capacities for self-development and for choosing and fulfilling its own destiny be matured.

And if these words of Jesus seemed at first chilling and repelling, they were followed by words of unmistakable affection: "Go to My brothers, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." This is the message of the risen Lord to men. He has become the link between us and all that is highest and best. We know that He has overcome all evil and left it behind. We know that Christ must ascend to the highest, and yet we know also that He will not enter where we cannot follow. We know that His love binds Him to us as strongly as His rights carry Him to God. We can as little believe that He will abandon us and leave us out of His eternal enjoyment, as we can believe that God would refuse to own Him as Son. And it is this which Christ puts in the forefront of His message as risen and ascending: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father." The joy that awaits Me with God awaits you also;

the power I go to exercise is the power of your Father. The holiness, the power, the victory, I have achieved and now enjoy are yours; I am your Brother: what I claim, I claim for you.

Prayer

We desire to join ourselves to that great company who joyfully commemorate the resurrection of Christ, and to feel something of the gladness and triumph with which His first disciples recognised that He had conquered death. Enable us to believe surely that this had a place among the realities of time. And may we never forget or lose sight of what we have in Christ, but may we be brought within the influence of that holy risen life, and accept the heavenly calling wherewith we are called.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

"What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?"—MATTHEW xxvii. 22.

"I bore with thee, thy hardness, coldness, slights,
For three and thirty years."

THE presentation of Christ to men now divides them into two classes as at the first. There are always those who accept and those who reject Him. His contemporaries showed, for the most part, a complete ignorance of what might be expected of God, a native inability to understand spiritual greatness, and to relish it when presented to them. The very presentation to men of the possibility of becoming perfectly pure reveals what at heart they are. By the judgment each man passes on Christ he passes judgment on himself.

Let us stir ourselves to a clearer decision by remembering that He is presented to us as to His contemporaries. Time was when any one going into the synagogue at Nazareth would have seen Him, and might have spoken with Him. But the particular thirty years during which this manifestation of God on earth lasted makes no material difference to the thing itself. The Incarnation was to be some time, and it is as real having occurred then as if it were occurring now. It occurred in its fit time; but its bearing on us is not dependent on the time of its occurrence. If it had been accomplished in our day, what should we have thought of it? Would it have been nothing to us to see God, to hear Him, perhaps to have had His eye turned upon us with personal observation, with pity, with remonstrance? Would it have been nothing to us to see Him taking the sinner's place, scourged, mocked, crucified? And are we to suffer the mere fact of Christ's being incarnate in a past age and not in our own to alter our attitude towards Him, and

blind us to the reality? Of more importance than anything that is now happening in our own life is this Incarnation of the only-begotten of the Father.

Prayer

We thank Thee that in order to raise us out of this our lost estate Thy Son should have stooped down and become partaker of our sorrow and bearer of our sins; should have become one of us, connecting Himself with us, not for a little while only, but eternally, not to bring us a little on our way and leave us, but having loved us He loves us to the end. May we see with increasing clearness the significance of Christ's life and death, and may there grow up between us and Him a confidence and a friendship which nothing can destroy.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

Christ's Sacrifice and Ours

"Nought can I bring, dear Lord, for all I owe,
Yet let my full heart what it can bestow;
Like ointment sweet, let my devotion prove,
Forgiven greatly, how I greatly love."

IN the sin-offering the victim was the sinner's substitute, suffering what the sinner deserved, and suffering it *in order that the sinner might escape.* In the burnt-offering the victim was the sinner's representative, expressing what the offerer himself inwardly felt and did. The burnt-offering was presented to God, not that the sinner might escape punishment, but that the hearty self-devotement of the man to God might be

expressed. Now, it is of prime importance to observe that the sacrifice of our Lord comprehends both these offerings, which were used by God to symbolise its fulness, and, therefore, that our Lord Himself is both our Substitute and our Representative; in other words, there is embraced in His sacrifice something which He has done for us in order that we may be saved the doing of it, and something which He has done in order that we may the better do it. What He did as our Substitute we need not attempt to do over again; what He did as our Representative we must ceaselessly aim at. He is our sin-offering, by whose blood we are cleansed from guilt and accepted as God's children and people. He is also our burnt-offering, in whose sacrifice we recognise the ideal after which we strive, until by the power of His Spirit our sacrifice is also perfect. To disconnect the two is to lose both.

PRAYER

We thank Thee for forgiveness, that by a word, for the asking, without toil, without penance on our part, we can be forgiven. We are ashamed when we compare the love we bear to Christ with the reasons there are for loving Him. We have forgotten that indeed He is our hope, that without Him it had been better for us never to have been. O Lord, help us out of our deadness. Give us sympathy with, and a deep, lasting, and fruitful gratitude to our Redeemer. Let not the dreams or realities of life crowd out of our hearts His image in all its fulness of grace, but may it at all times stand before us till shame deepens into repentance, and repentance transforms us into His image.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE SON

How we may Become Sons

"The Work of God."—John vi. 29.

"God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts."—Galatians iv. 6.

IT was through the human will of the Lord that the Divine will of the Eternal Son uniformly worked and used the whole of His human nature.

It is in this perfect Sonship of Christ we first learn what a son should be. It is by His perfect loyalty to the Father's will, by His uniform adoption of it as the best, the only thing He can do, that we begin to understand our connection with God, and to recognise that in His will alon is our

blessedness. Naturally, we resent the rule of any will but our own; we have not by nature such love for God as would put His will first. To our reason it becomes manifest that there is nothing higher or happier for us: we see that there is nothing more elevating, nothing more essential to a hopeful life, than that we make God's purposes in the world our own, and do that very thing which He sees to be worth doing and which He desires to do. Yet we find that the adoption of this filial attitude, natural, rational, and inviting as it seems, is just the most difficult of all difficulties—is, indeed, the battle of life. Who among us can say that we do nothing of ourselves, nothing at our own instance, that our life is entirely at God's disposal?

To this filial disposition on the part of the Son the Father responds: "The Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." If we ask how Jesus saw the Father's works, the answer must be that it is by inward sympathy the Son apprehends what the Father wills. By His own

purity, love, and goodness He knew what the Father's goodness willed. We in our measure can see what God is doing in the world, and can forward God's work.

Prayer

We thank Thee that Jesus Christ has come to show us that it is Eternal Life to know the Father's heart; and to lift us up into the fellowship of His own filial knowledge of God and trust in God; to show us that His eternal purpose is to carry on the revelation of the Father through all the ages and in all places, and that He calls us to pray for the accomplishment of that purpose, and to work for it.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

"Another Comforter."—JOHN xiv. 16.

"Breathe on me, Breath of God
Till I am wholly Thine."

IN all ages, both before and after Christ it has been the clear conviction of devout souls that God sought them much more ardently and persistently than they sought God. The truth which shines most conspicuously in the experience of all the saved is that they were saved by God and not by themselves. If human experience is to be trusted at all, if it in any case reflects the substantial verities of the spiritual world, then we may hold it as proved in the uniform experience of men that God somehow com-

municated to them a living energy, and not only taught them what to do, but gave them strength to do it. If under the Christian dispensation we are left to make the best we can for ourselves of the truth taught by Christ, and of the example He set us in His life and death, then the Christian dispensation fails to supply us with that very thing which is sought through all religions—actual access to a living source of spiritual strength. I believe the resurrection of Christ is established by stronger evidence than exists for any other historical fact; but apart altogether from the historical evidence, the entire experience of God's people goes to show that Christ, as the Mediator between God and man, as the Representative of God and the Channel of His influence upon us, must be now alive, and must be in a position to exert a personal care and a personal influence, and to yield a present and inward assistance. Were it otherwise, we should be left without a Saviour, to struggle against the enemies of the soul in our own strength, and this would be a com-

plete reversal of the experience of all those who in past ages have been engaged in the same strife and have been victorious.

Prayer

Give us a keener sense of our oneness with Christ, that our safety depends on a living personal union with Him, that because He lives we shall live also. May we cordially believe that we can find more help in the presence of the Holy Spirit than in the bodily presence of Christ. We thank Thee for the assurance this brings us that one day we shall be holy as Thou art holy. May we strive more earnestly after perfect conformity to Thy will, more devotion to Thy purposes, more humble acceptance of Thy love.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

"He will convince the world of sin."—JOHN vi. 8.

"Sure never till my latest breath can I forget that look,
He fixed His dying eyes on me, though not a word He spoke."

THERE is no consideration from which the deceitfulness of sin will not escape, nor any fear which the recklessness of sin will not brave, nor any authority which self-will cannot override but only this: Christ has died for me, to save me from my sin, and I am sinning still, not regarding His blood, not meeting His purpose. In presence of the death of Christ we cannot any longer make a mock of sin or think lightly of it, as if it were on our own responsibility and at our own risk we sinned.

But not only does the death of Christ exhibit the intricate connections of our sin with other persons and the grievous consequences of sin in general, but also it exhibits the enormity of this particular sin of rejecting Christ. "He will convince the world of sin, *because they believed not on Me.*" It was this sin in point of fact which cut to the heart the crowd at Jerusalem first addressed by Peter. Peter had nothing to say of their looseness of life, of their worldliness, of their covetousness; he did not go into particulars of conduct calculated to bring a blush to their cheeks; he took up but one point, and by a few convincing remarks showed them the enormity of crucifying the Lord of Glory. The lips which a few days before had cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" now cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" how escape from the crushing condemnation of mistaking God's image for a criminal? In that hour Christ's words were fulfilled; they were convinced of sin because they believed not on Him.

PRAYER

O God, Thou hast said that if we confess our sins Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Help us therefore now to confess sincerely and utterly as those who expect pardon and not punishment. We acknowledge that we have lived as if we had no God, believing little, expecting little, loving little, obeying little. Especially we have not believed that our natures could be changed, and have not counted that there was much concern with Thee whether we continued in sin or accepted Thy salvation. O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name deliver us and purge away our sins for Thy name's sake.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

"If I go not away the Comforter will not come."—JOHN xvi. 7.

"How hard to think through cold and dark and dearth,
That Thou art nearer now than when eye-seen on earth.'

INEVITABLY the disciples must have argued that, if the words and works of Jesus Himself had not broken down the unbelief of the world, it was not likely that anything which they could say or do would have that effect. If the impressive presence of Christ Himself had not attracted and convinced all men, how was it possible that mere telling about what He had said, and done, and been, would convince them? He had reminded them how little effect His own works and words had had. "If I had not

come and spoken unto them they had not had sin . . . if I had not done among them the works which none other did . . . but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father." What power, then, could break down this obstinate unbelief?

Our Lord assures them that together with their witness-bearing there will be an all-powerful Witness—"the Spirit of Truth," one who could find access to the hearts and minds to which they addressed themselves and carry truth home to conviction. It was on this account that it was "expedient" that their Lord should depart, and that His visible presence should be superseded by the presence of the Spirit. It was necessary that His death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father should take place, in order that His supremacy might be secured. And in order that He might be everywhere and inwardly present with men, it was necessary that He should be visible nowhere on earth. The inward spiritual presence depended on the bodily absence.

We recognise Thy goodness in making this the promise which should satisfy all expectation, even that Thou shouldst dwell with men and make us Thy people. Help us to appreciate the full joy of a state in which we are brought into closest contact with Thee. May we feel that no higher, truer joy could be offered, and may we be strengthened to choose this as that which we ourselves most earnestly desire.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

"Praying in the Spirit."—EPHESIANS vi. 16.

"Flesh and heart would faint and fail,
But there stands within the veil
One who ever doth prevail."

PRAYING "in Christ's name" is not so easy an achievement as we are apt to think. Praying in Christ's name means, no doubt, that we go to God, not in our own name, but in His. He has given us power to use His name, as when we send a messenger we bid him use our name.

But praying in Christ's name means more than this. It means that we pray for such things as will promote Christ's kingdom. When we do anything in another's name it

is for Him we do it. When we take possession of a property or a legacy in the name of some society, it is not for our own private advantage, but for the society we take possession. Yet how constantly do we overlook this obvious condition of acceptable prayer! To pray in Christ's name is to seek what He seeks, to ask aid in promoting what He has at heart. To come in Christ's name and plead selfish and worldly aims is absurd. To pray in Christ's name is to pray in the spirit in which He Himself prayed and for objects He desires. When we measure our prayers by this rule we cease to wonder that so few seem to be answered. Is God to answer prayers that positively lead men away from Him? Is He to build them up in the presumption that happiness can be found in the pursuit of selfish objects and worldly comfort? It is when a man stands, as these disciples stood, detached from worldly hopes and finding all in Christ, so clearly apprehending the sweep and benignity of Christ's will as to see that it comprehends all good to man, and

that life can serve no purpose if it do not help to fulfil that will—it is then a man prays with assurance and finds his prayer answered.

Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray—teach us to love the thing that Thou commandest and to desire that which Thou dost promise. Give us that gift of faith by which alone we can have the vision of Jesus Christ or can live to Thee. Give us the beginning of all true prayer, a sincere willingness to be made holy, to be loosed from sin. And grant us the aid of Thy Holy Spirit to help our infirmities and to lead us into all truth, giving us clearer views, deeper convictions, more steadfast purposes.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY

THIRSTING FOR GOD

"If any man thirst."—JOHN vii. 37.

"Heavenly springs shall there restore thee
Fresh from God's exhaustless tides."

TO know and appreciate the things which are freely given to us of God a man must have the Spirit of God. For God's gifts are spiritual; they attach to character, to what is eternally ours. They cannot be received by those who refuse the severity of God's training. The path to these eternal, all-satisfying joys may be hard; Christ's path was not easy, and they who follow Him must in one form or other have their faith in the unseen tested. They must really, and not only in word, pass from dependence on

this present world to dependence on God; they must somehow come to believe that underneath and in all we here see and experience lies God's unalterable, unmingled love, that ultimately it is this they have to do with, this that explains all.

How soon do men think they have exhausted the one inexhaustible, the love and resources of God! how ready are they to conclude that for them existence is a failure and can yield no perfect joy, while as yet they know as little of the things God has prepared for them that love Him as the new-born babe knows of the life and experiences that lie before it. You have but touched the hem of His garment; what must it be to be clasped to His heart? Happy they to whom the darkness of this world reveals the boundless distances of the starry heavens, and who find that the blows which have shattered their earthly happiness have merely broken the shell which confined their true life and have given them entrance into a world infinite, eternal.

Give us sobriety of hope, a hope that does not expect great things from this world, but is fixed on those things which Thou hast promised; and as some of these are yet unseen, within the veil, where our life is hid with Christ in God, do Thou, Lord, enliven our faith, that our hope also may live and keep us above the world. May this hope be as the anchor of our souls, not puffing us up with vain and enthusiastic imaginings, but enabling us to meet steadily and ride through those trials Thou hast appointed for us, that tribulation through which Thy kingdom of peace and joy is to be entered. May our hope be so surely fixed on Thy promises, and may we so drink into the joy of communion with Thee, that we shall be fortified alike against the allurements and the threatenings of this world.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY

SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE IN GOD

"My grace is sufficient."—2 CORINTHIANS xii. 9.

"Ours is such a full salvation."

LEARNING as we do to take our own measure, we become convinced of our littleness, of our incapacity to shine, our inability to remove ignorance, our helplessness in presence of surrounding and oppressive darkness.

When we become profoundly convinced of our blundering methods, of our beating the air, of the feeble and inefficient assaults we make upon the dense masses of evil around us, when we are saddened by our own incompetence and futility, there are reasonable grounds

which should recall us to more hopeful thoughts. For all the work required of us there is an unfailing supply of grace. We are not called upon to create a holy spirit for ourselves. Holiness sufficient for all moral beings exists in God. There is that in Him which can sustain in goodness the spirit of each. The Holy Spirit is equal to all demands that can be made upon Him. The Holy Spirit is God; so that as there is in God life enough for all creatures, a strength sufficient to maintain in being all that is, so there is in God a holiness sufficient for the need of all. There is strength and grace enough in God to carry through the whole work that this world requires. In God there is patience, love, wisdom, sacrifice—in a word, goodness enough for the overcoming of all evil. And this goodness is communicable. It is communicable and it is through Christ it is communicated. Each man receives the spirit of Christ, and is enabled to live as Christ lived in the service of men and to the glory of God, in so far as he submits himself to Christ's

rule and is truly reconciled to God in Christ, when he recognises Christ as King and Priest, and keeps himself in real and spiritual connection with Him.

Prayer

Lord, we are very different from what we might have been if we had taken Thee at Thy word, and believed that Thou art able to make us partakers of Thy fulness, and fellow-workers with Thee. We ask Thee for a simpler faith—a faith which makes Thy presence and Thy spirit the most real of all realities. Thou, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, hast promised that Thou wilt be with us in our poverty, our frailty, our emptiness. Therefore we will hope in Thee.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification."—1 THESSALONIANS iv. 3.

"According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."—EPHESIANS iii. 11.

MANY men look with longing to what is eternal and spiritual and resolve to win this inheritance. And this resolve they often make as if its accomplishment depended solely on their own endurance. They act as if by taking advantage of God's promises, and by passing through certain states of mind and prescribed duties, they could, irrespective of God's present attitude towards them and constant love, win eternal happiness. In the life of such persons there must therefore come a time when their own spiritual energy seems all

to collapse in that painful and utter way in which, when the body is exhausted, the muscles are suddenly found to be cramped and heavy and no longer responsive to the will.

In that hour the man learns the most valuable truth he can learn—that it is God who is wishing to save him, not he who must wrest a blessing from an unwilling God. We deal with Him as if He were opposed to our best purposes and grudged to advance us in all good, as if our best prospects began in our own conception and we had to win God over to our views. If God is unwilling, then there is an end; no device nor force will get us past Him. If He is willing, why all this unworthy dealing with Him, as if the whole idea and accomplishment of salvation did not proceed from Him?

Prayer

We are weary of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, which will not come to the simplicity of asking that we may receive; weary of the pride of our own hearts, which will not

come to the humility of receiving daily at Thy hand. Yet if we receive not we are poor indeed. We thank Thee for all we have without our asking, and which no efforts of ours could have brought us, for our creation—of Thine own free grace—for the finished work of Christ. We thank Thee that for us Thou hast a purpose of God—that for us there is a Saviour who has loved us and given Himself for us.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY

PRESENT VICTORY OVER SIN

"Thine, O Lord, is the victory."—1 Chronicles xxix. 11.
"I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil."—John xvii. 15.

SIN is as much sin now as ever it can be in the future. If it is wrong to sin in the world to come, it is wrong to sin now. Sin, if hateful to God, must be as hateful now as ever it can be. If God is in earnest in delivering me from sin, He will deliver me now; and if I am in earnest about being delivered, no expectation of future deliverance can compensate for the misery of present bondage. The Saviour I need is one who can help me to-day, one who counts my present enemies His enemies, and

who can communicate to me such real strength as shall make the difference between my being defeated and conquering them. If He merely promises to take me out from among my foes, if He merely says I shall be rid of them when I die, is that to be called victory? Certainly not; and it is not such victory Christ offers.

Prayer

O God, increase our faith. May we at all times believe that Thou requirest of us nothing that Thy almighty power is not able to accomplish in us. Give us such belief in the truth of Thy promises, and the rightness of Thy commandments, as will prompt us more earnestly to strive after obtaining what Thou hast promised, and more steadily desirous of doing what Thou requirest. We thank Thee that we can come to Thee as our God who has given His only Son to die for us, and has with Him freely given us all things. We thank Thee that Thou wilt not be content with anything that does not perfectly fulfil Thy perfect love

and purpose. When we consider that it is to the fulness of Godhead Thou givest us access, that it is the resources of God Thou permittest us to draw upon, we are ashamed at the poverty of our requests. Oh, help us so truly to believe in Thy love that we shall feel our life encompassed by Thee, that we shall at all times feel the blessedness of dependence on Thee.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY

FORGIVENESS THE ROOT OF PURITY

"Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."—PSALM li. 7.

"Oh, for a heart that never sins,
Oh, for a soul washed white!"

FORGIVENESS may be granted by a word. It calls for no long process. And thus our guilt as transgressors of God's law may at any time be removed by a momentary act of God.

But that which defiles us in God's sight is not only our guilt. We have not only la ourselves open to punishment, but we ha given harbour to wicked imaginations, and find in our hearts evil propensities and c positions which excite loathing even in o selves. These defile us and make it impossi

that a pure God should find pleasure in intercourse with us. Can, then, the forgiveness pronounced by God be dissociated from inward purity, or does it include inward cleansing as well as the removal of guilt? The answer is obvious when we consider that the one condition on which we receive forgiveness is that we desire it. It is the man who wishes forgiveness who gets it. God does not scatter it blindfold and indiscriminately. He grants it to the man who feels that above all else he must be reconciled to God. The man who merely fears consequences may not be pardoned; but certainly every man who thirsts for God, and cannot live under His frown, every man who sincerely seeks friendship with God, receives God's forgiveness. But this craving for God's ...e implies that the love of sin has got its ...ath-blow in us, that a stronger power has ...ered us, and will at last prevail. Where ...d sees love for Himself He sees the root of ... purity. In every heart that craves His ...rdon because it prizes His favour He sees a ...nsing power that will gradually assert itself

throughout our whole nature, and leave no spot nor stain upon us.

Prayer

Thou who art the source of all gracious influences that can effectually help us, and without whom we cannot hope to live on and to live happily, do Thou be gracious to us and leave us not in the power of those things to which we have recklessly and ignorantly given ourselves. Establish between our souls and Christ a fuller confidence. May we know more of His power to save from sin; may we experience that His salvation is a complete provision for every want, applicable in all circumstances. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name.

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY

THE REAL VALUE OF LIFE

"What is your life?"—JAMES iv. 14.

"All things seem rushing straight into the dark,
But the dark still is God."

THERE are circumstances so afflicting and straitened, so tormenting and hampering, that we are apt to think we do well if only we do not cry out and let all the world know how we suffer; but there is a better thing to do always, and that is to set ourselves with patience and self-crucifixion to think of others and do our best for them. In the worst circumstances, in circumstances so perplexing we know not how to act, there remains a something to be done which we could in no other circumstances do, a good fruit to be borne

which needs these grievous circumstances as its soil, and which, when it is borne, will be more sweet to our taste eternally than all the happiness which success and pleasure in this world can give. The fact that our Lord thought human life—a life in this very world that we have to live through—worth living, and the most capable life for spending a Divine fulness of wisdom and goodness in, shows us that there are objects on which we may liberally spend ourselves in the persuasion that they will not disappoint us.

Prayer

Give us grace to set our hearts to understand Thy gracious dealings with us. Keep us, O God, from taking matters into our own hand instead of waiting to be led and guided by Thee. Help us truly and simply to trust Thee. Make us alive to the fact that Thou hast given each one of us a work to do for Thee, and that Thou hast placed us where we can best carry on Thy work. We thank Thee that Thou

requirest nothing that Thy grace will not fit us to do. Thou knowest our weakness, our ignorance, our sinfulness, better than we know it ourselves, and yet Thou hast chosen us for Thy service. Help us ever to seek first the things of Thy kingdom. Bring us into true harmony with our fellows. As Thou didst think them worthy to redeem may we despise none, shrink from none, speak evil of none. May we have love and patience to consider their needs, and may every good thing Thou doest towards them kindle some thankfulness in us.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY

WILL GOD IN VERY DEED DWELL WITH MEN?

"I will dwell in the midst of thee."—ZECHARIAH ii. 11.

"For thee I hung upon the cross in pain,
How, then, can I forget?"

BEYOND this, indeed, no promise can at any time go. If God dwells with us because He loves us and seeks our presence, this implies that all good will be ours. What can God do more than come and share with us? What else can He promise in order to encourage us? What more can He do than bring Himself? And if it would have been unreasonable of those to whom this promise was given to murmur, what must we say of murmuring now after the promise has been

fulfilled in a manner which beforehand none could dare anticipate? Are we to live as if this promise were yet unfulfilled? Are we to make no response, no acknowledgment? Is the fact of His presence to excite no hope, no ambition, no craving for the Divine? Are we to go on through life practically saying: "What matters it; what though God does love me? It is nothing to me though His love for me does draw Him to live with me." If so we wait in vain for any more encouraging fact to enter our life. In this alone have we all that we need to balance and guide our life. To live as in a world from which God can never pass away, this is the key to happiness and energy.

Prayer

Give us grace to consecrate the Lord God in our hearts and to make Him our sanctuary Thou art with us through all the years, through all the changes, with us to forgive, to encourage, to aid. O Lord, we know that Thou desirest to be our support and comfort in every time

of need and sorrow. Help us always to admit the comfort Thy presence and sympathy bring. Make us willing to put ourselves into Thy hand without fear or shrinking to receive whatever discipline Thou seest needful.

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY

REALITY OF UNSEEN HELP

"The battle is the Lord's."—1 SAMUEL xvii. 47.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."—ZECHARIAH iv. 6.

ZECHARIAH had shared in the prevailing despondency of his time. He did not see what good could be accomplished by men of so little pith as Zerubbabel and the rest. He had taken their measure, and he despaired of them as the root or beginning of any noble undertaking or any fruitful work. Such men can never shine as lights in the world. Such feeble, incompetent persons could only bring disgrace on religion.

But in the vision of the candlestick it was made clear to Zechariah's mind that he had

been wrong, not perhaps in his judgment of his contemporaries, but in forgetting one contemporary of whom he had made no account, "Not by might, nor by power"—so far he was right, there was neither might nor power —"but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." He is reminded of the source of the Church's light, and it is revealed to him that the oil which feeds this light—the Spirit, that is, which produces right action and God-glorifying results in men—flows from an inexhaustible source beyond the light itself; so that you can never measure the light by looking at the wick, or at the amount of oil each bowl can contain, but only by looking at the source whence the oil is supplied. With immense significance the oil was seen to be derived from two *living* olive-trees — obviously to teach that though the bowls might be very small, the supply out of which the bowls could be refilled was inexhaustibly large, a living fountain of oil.

PRAYER

Lord, teach us to trust Thee. We know that there is every reason to trust Thee, but we need Thy help lest we be moved away from the beginning of our confidence. May Thy Spirit be with us to point out to us and to impress on us the reasons there are for trusting Thee, that we may never be beaten down so low as to forget that Thou art on our side. May He remind us that Thou art the unchangeable God, from everlasting to everlasting, a sufficient centre for the faith of all that Thou hast made. May He bring to our mind Thy lovingkindnesses which have been ever of old, that knowing Thy name as the dwelling-place of Thy people in all generations, we also may put our trust in Thee.

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY

THINGS FREELY GIVEN

"Things freely given."—1 Corinthians ii. 12.
"In Thy presence is fulness of joy."—Psalm xvi. 11.

WHAT men's eyes need specially to be opened to is the bounty of God and the consequent wealth and hopefulness of human life. Paul's wondering delight in God's grace and loving adaptation of Himself to human needs continually finds utterance in his writings. His own sense of unworthiness magnified the forgiving mercy of God. He rejoiced in a Divine love which was passing knowledge, but which he knew could be relied upon to the utmost. The vision of this love opened to his hope a vista of happiness. There is a natural joy in living

that all men can understand. This life in many ways appeals to our thirst for happiness, and often it seems as if we needed nothing more. But in one way or other most of us learn that what is naturally presented to us in this world is not enough, indeed only brings in the long run anxiety and grief. And then it is that, by God's grace, men come to find that this life is but a small lagoon leading to and fed by the boundless ocean of God's love beyond. They learn that there is a hope that cannot be blighted, a joy that is uninterrupted, a fulness of life that meets and satisfies every instinct, and affection, and purpose. They begin to see the things that God has prepared for them that ove Him, the things that are "freely given" to us of God.

Prayer

We thank Thee that Thy goodness has created us capable of becoming Thy children, that this life may become to us the foundation of

a perfect blessedness, the beginning of an unending and uncorrupt existence. We desire to come to Thee remembering the great realities which have been enacted for this end. We thank Thee for all we have without our asking, and which no effort of ours could ever have brought us; we thank Thee for our creation, for the finished work of Christ.

THIRTIETH SUNDAY

GOD'S HELP EVER PRESENT TO FAITH

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for."—HEBREWS xi. 1.

"Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil?"—PSALM xlix. 5.

WE have our dull and ignominious times, when nothing seems to prosper with us, when we feel as if everything Divine were remote or unreal, when our prayers have been so long unanswered that we begin seriously to doubt whether prayer avails. To have an eye for things spiritual makes all the difference at these times. The veil that hides the forces which really rule this world is lifted, and we see things in their true relations. We see the swift couriers of Jehovah incessantly streaming in from all

parts of the earth, we see that there is nothing unobserved, and that He to whom this detailed information is present does not wait to be urged or prompted to action, but that with gravity, earnestness, and impassioned tenderness, He interposes at the fitting juncture. While we are thinking that our efforts to set matters right are not observed or regarded by any higher power, there is a grave and comprehensive consideration of our affairs, a sense of responsibility which accepts and discharges the management of all human interests, an efficient activity to which ours is as negligence.

Prayer

O God, remove all that hinders our devotion, all misconception of Thy nature, all spiritless views of Thy Providence, all despair of life. Many things make it difficult for us to come into Thy presence as we ought, but it is our comfort to know that Thou art with us not only in our times

of worship but in the whole of our life. Lift us out of our indifference, and help us to think rightly of Thee. Increase our faith by revealing Thyself to us. Command our thoughts and assert Thine authority and prove Thy power over our spirits. Help us, not because our faith is strong or our love ardent, but because we need all things, and Thou art the God of all grace. Give us that faith which is the vision of things spiritual, the consciousness of Thy presence with us continually.

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY

CALLED ACCORDING TO GOD'S PURPOSE

"Called according to His own purpose and grace."—ROMANS viii. 28.

"Each passing day, each passing hour,
To live in His great power."

IF you asked yourself or any one else, Is it a matter of absolute indifference to God what results from your life? you would be answered that it is impossible to conceive of God at all without supposing that He desires every human life to serve some good purpose. This, at all events, is Christ's view. This is what made His life what it was, influential to all time, and the unfailing source of the highest energy to all other lives. That is to say, He has given

us the most cogent of all demonstrations that in proportion as we accept His view of the connection of our life with God shall we resemble Him in the utility and permanent result of all we do. It has become obvious that in the world of nature nothing is isolated and independent, that all nature is one whole, governed by one idea and fulfilling one purpose. Human lives are under the same law. No life is outside of the plan which comprehends the whole; every life contributes something to the fulfilment of the great purpose all are to serve. Our Lord tells us that this purpose is in the mind of God, and that He judges us by our fulfilment or non-fulfilment of His will. And that we should be reluctant to bring forth fruit to God or hesitate to live for Him has its root in the foolish idea that God and we have opposing interests, so that to help out God's idea of the world and to work with Him and towards His end is really not our best. Nothing seems enough to teach us that God is all on our side and that He has laid

up for us abundant provision for feeling and thought and for spiritual strength and joy.

Prayer

May we be really one with Christ, not in name only but in love. As His life was shaped by His love for us and union with us, so may ours be lived in conformity with His blessed life. May we be enabled to believe that we can be as truly nourished by Christ's life as each member is by the life of the body. And as He embraced all men in His love and could leave none outside, so may we be emptied of self and filled with love to our fellow-men, doing good to all as we have opportunity.

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY

GOD'S GRANT AND OUR CONQUEST

"Who is on the Lord's side?"—Exodus xxxii. 26.

"He always wins who sides with God."

"IF so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out." This is the law of *our* acquisition also. What becomes really ours is what we fight for inch by inch, killing as we go, slaughtering the obstinate foe on his own soil, so that the property be left to us uncontested. God's grant is useless to us, quite useless, if we will not draw the sword to conquer it, if we will not wield the axe and clear it. These two united form the strongest of titles, God's grant and our own conquest. What a man

wins by his own faith, fortitude, and persistence, by his own nerve, vigour, and hardihood, fighting as a soldier commissioned by God to do battle against evil—*that*, and nothing else, he has as his very own.

Prayer

May we feel the guilt of sin and be ashamed of blindly thwarting Thy purposes, doing what hinders the advance of good and stains and degrades our own soul. Help us to master our own spirit, to repress and eradicate all evil tendencies, all discontent and envy, all lust of the world and pride of life, all sloth, and fear, and vanity, and every kind of weakness. Deliver us from sins and vices that keep us on a low level of character and life and prevent us from being of much use in the world. May we be more alive to the fact that we have this work to do. Help us to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us; help us to overcome every motion of the body and

mind that is repugnant to Thy holy will. We thank Thee that Thou hast promised us Thy help, that Thy grace is sufficient for all our need.

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

"Christ our Passover."—1 CORINTHIANS v. 7.

"He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them."—2 CORINTHIANS v. 15.

CHRIST is our Passover, because through Him there is made the acknowledgment that we belong to God. He is in very truth the prime and flower, the best representative of our race, the firstborn of every creature. He is the One who can make for all others this acknowledgment that we are God's people. And He does so by perfectly giving Himself up to God. This fact that we belong to God, that we men are His creatures and subjects, has never been perfectly acknowledged save by Christ.

Only those of us who see that we ought to live for God can claim Christ as our representative. Only those who wished to go free from Egypt to serve God sacrificed the Paschal lamb; the service of God, the living as His people, was the object they had in view. What object have we? If we mean to be of His spirit, if we mean to count it our meat and drink to do God's will, if we are really disposed to seek the advancement of God's purposes, and not to seek great things for ourselves, we may speak of Him as our Substitute and Sacrifice. If He is our Passover, the meaning of this is that He gives us liberty to serve God, that He comes to redeem us from all that hinders our serving Him. The one question is, Do we at heart wish to give ourselves up to God? Do we find in His life and death, in His submission to God and meek acceptance of all God appointed, the truest representation of what we would fain be and do, but cannot?

PRAYER

May we live more entirely upon Christian motives, and in a Christian atmosphere, letting our thoughts and feelings be elevated and sanctified and softened by continual contact with the love of Christ. We have been slow to understand Thy purposes, to understand in how true and full a sense we are thine. But our hope is still in Thee, and while we are ashamed that we have not shrunk from wounding Thy Fatherly feeling by coldness, indifference, and sullen unbelief, yet we would come to Thee with hope as well as with shame. May we be able truly to abide in Thee, that our whole character may be transformed and our will fashioned in accordance with Thine.

THIRTY-FOURTH SUNDAY

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

"Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us."—1 CORINTHIANS v. 7.

"One only stream, a stream of blood,
Can wash away the blot."

THE Paschal lamb was offered, not as in any way worthy of God's acceptance, but being looked on as a substitute for the family, it saved the firstborn from death. God did not wish to smite Israel, but to save them. But He did not simply omit the Israelite houses and pick out the Egyptian ones through the land. He left it to the choice of the people whether they would accept His deliverance and belong to Him or not. The angel of judgment was to recognise no distinction between Israelite and Egyptian save this of

the sprinkled, stained doorposts. Death was to enter every house where the blood was not visible; mercy was to rest on every family that dwelt under this sign. God meant that all should be rescued, but He would not force any—we may say He *could* not force any—to yield themselves to Him.

And now Christ our Passover is slain and we are asked to determine whether we will use His sacrifice or no. We are not asked to add anything to the efficacy of that sacrifice, but only to avail ourselves of it. Wherever there was faith there was a man in the twilight sprinkling his lintel, and resolved that no solicitation should tempt him from behind the blood till the angel had passed by. He took God at His word; he believed God meant to deliver him, and he did what he was told was his part. To us God opens a way out from all bondage and from all that gives us the spirit of slaves. What response are you making? Can you believe that God seeks to deliver you, and even now designs for you a life that is worthy of His greatness and love,

a life that shall perfectly satisfy you and give play to all your worthy desires and energies.

Prayer

O God, we thank Thee that in Christ Jesus we may draw near to Thee with confidence. We thank Thee for the finished work of our Redeemer, and for the assurance and hope that His victory over death and the grave brings us. May our whole life be penetrated and governed by the Spirit of Christ, and all through our everyday work and duties and enjoyments may we never forget that we belong to Thee. Lord Jesus, abide in us, and keep us abiding in Thee.

THIRTY-FIFTH SUNDAY

CHRIST THE NEW AND LIVING WAY

"A new and living way."—HEBREWS x. 20.

"By whom also we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—ROMANS v. 2.

TO all who are thinking that for such as they are purity, strength, peace can never be, who feel weak and shut up, so that hourly they are tempted to let go the word, Christ presents Himself as He that is holy, He that is true; who, having the key, hath set open before you a door. Do you not seem to be gaining ground? Do all these promises from which you expect so much seem locked treasures to you? Are you driven back from the riches of Christ as if they were

not for this world at all, and as if you must be satisfied to live by the motives, for the aims, on the principles of other men who make no profession? When you have expected too easy and rapid a conquest of sin, too great liberty and strength in duty, does some tempter whisper that you should not, in reason, expect any conquest of sin nor any strength in duty? Are you miserable, and see nothing beyond and through your misery and have no thought of any change of it, but just heartlessly go through your daily work for your daily bread, sighing coming before your meat—sighing that you have to live instead of thanksgiving that you do live? Then to you comes this word of Christ: "I have set before you an open door." Possession to the full is not for this world; but as little is despair or heartless indifference. Hope —sure, confident, and bright-eyed hope—is for this world, a hope that will carry you forward through the open door set before you.

PRAYER

We thank thee, O God, that Thou hast consecrated for us a new and living way, and that with boldness we may enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Grant that we may have that higher tone in conduct, that truer and sincerer devotedness to what is good, that purer conscience, that deeper truthfulness, that come from fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Give us some growth in the divine life, that we may be encouraged in it, that we may not feel that in us are obstacles that cannot be removed. May we believe Thy Word; may we accept the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ; may we rely upon Him as absolutely true, yielding ourselves to Him, that so we may learn of Him.

THIRTY-SIXTH SUNDAY

NO NEW LIFE WITH THE OLD HEART

"Enoch walked with God."—GENESIS v. 24.

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?"—AMOS iii. 3.

TO be truly servants of God, this is the difficulty—to sink our own cause and prospects and will in the cause of God; to be truly in God's hand to be used as He wills; to come back day by day and wait for orders from Him; to acquire thus the understanding of what He seeks to do in the world, and gradually to abjure every other thought than how to accomplish this, to be consecrated and to be faithful; this is what God requires of us all. And to this *God will bring you*, so that the hopes and plans of

merely selfish advancement are just so much affliction and sorrow sown for you; the eager ambitions that burn in your hearts and stimulate you to work are but driving you off the road; and from them all you must return to the simplicity of God's servants who care only to please Him. It is when we have no aim but this that we find rest.

It matters little in what form our self-seeking shows itself. We strive to improve our character, and gradually it dawns on us that the reason our efforts are vain is that we are striving to do God's will, not simply because it is God's will but because we shall be worthier persons if we do it—striving to live a new life with an old heart. Self is our centre and object, and all is wrong with us till God is our object, till we truly, simply, and directly love Him.

Prayer

Thou art our God, and all that we have is Thine—our life, our breath, and all things.

All station, influence, wealth, ability, success, advantages, hopes, all are of Thee, and we lay them at Thy feet; desiring that Thou wouldst enable each one of us, contradicting the dictates of our own hearts, to consecrate ourselves to Thee, and thus lay the right foundation for our lives. We thank Thee if Thou hast taught us to live cheerfully and confidently, not because we have so much of our own, but because we are ourselves Thine. We thank Thee that Thou hast taught us to choose Thee as our inheritance and portion, and to believe that when all those things in which we now delight shall have passed away, Thou remainest able to give us higher and better things, opening still Thyself as the dwelling-place of Thy people in all generations.

THIRTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY

FULNESS OF LIFE IN CHRIST'S LIFE

"That our hearts may surely there be fixed
Where true joys are to be found."

WE mistake when we think that fulness of life can be found anywhere else than in Christ. He has come for the express purpose of enlarging, deepening, and intensifying life—"I am come that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly." He is the God-appointed source of fulness of life, and until we accept and use Him we cannot know the strength, the hope, the liberty, the largeness of life, that God designs for us. A kind of life you may have out of Christ, but so long as you fail to use what God has provided for your full life, you have not that

perfect manhood He means you to have. There are powers in you undeveloped, and the best uses and joys you miss.

Do not look, then, at fellowship with Christ as an hospital to which you may one day be driven for refuge and for succour. Do not ever think of it as something which you might be the better for but can get along without. But understand that it is the one only means by which you can reach the highest, and become all that you were meant to be.

Prayer

We would praise Thee that Thou hast called us to union with Thyself, that we may aim at an eternal life full of glory, honour, and service, and we pray Thee to help us that we may count the main use of this world to be our preparation and blessed opportunity for becoming fit for another.

Forbid that we should ever think of life as a mere spending of time; may we believe in Thy purpose, and that in Christ Jesus Thou

hast made provision inexhaustible for every part of our nature and for the need of all Thy creatures. We thank Thee that Thou puttest it within the reach of every one to make his life worthy and satisfying.

THIRTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY

TRUE MANHOOD

"In the great hand of God I stand and thence
Look out on life, His endless holy feast."

TO Joseph in Egypt there was nothing left but his own manhood and his faith in God. But so easily did he throw off all vain regrets and stifle all vindictive and morbid feelings, so readily did he adjust himself to and so heartily enter into life as it presented itself to him, that he speedily rose to be overseer in the house of Potiphar. You can hear him saying deep down in his heart and almost unconsciously to himself: "If the world is full of hatred, there is all the more need that at least one man should forgive and love; if men's hearts are black with selfishness,

ambition, and lust, all the more reason for me to be pure and to do my best for all whom my service can reach; if cruelty, lying, and fraud meet me at every step, all the more am I called to conquer these by integrity and guilelessness."

Prayer

We thank Thee that things are ordered for our good, that the result of all is to justify Thy wisdom and love, that though on the way many things happen to us which are hard to bear and difficult to understand, the end of all is to be perfect victory, perfect peace, perfect joy. We thank Thee that our essential self nothing can touch, that our spiritual part is above all harm, hid in God.

For all the schooling of this life we thank Thee; save us from being defeated and damaged by those very ingredients in our lot which Thou meanest for our training. May no experience make us uncharitable, self-engrossed, contemptuous, but may it rather lead us to

a deeper penitence, a more assured trust in Thee.

Save us from finding hollowness in our own hearts and monotony and weariness in life. May we have within us a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

THIRTY-NINTH SUNDAY

IN GOD'S WILL OUR PEACE

"The world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."—1 JOHN ii. 17.

"In His will is our tranquillity."

ONE has no words to express what it must have been to Joseph to see his fellow-prisoner have his dreams so gladly and speedily fulfilled, while he himself, who had so long waited on the true God, was left waiting still, and now so utterly unbefriended that there seemed no possible way of ever connecting himself with the world outside the prison walls. Being pressed thus for an answer to the question, What does God mean to make of my life? he was brought to see and to hold as the most important truth for him that the

first concern is that God's purposes be accomplished, the second that his own dreams be fulfilled. He was enabled to put God truly in the first place, and to see that by forwarding the interests of other men he might be as serviceably furthering the purposes of God as if he were furthering his own interests. He was compelled to seek for some principle that would sustain and guide him in the midst of much disappointment and perplexity, and he found it in the conviction that the essential thing to be accomplished in this world and to which every man must lay his shoulder is God's purpose. Let that go on, and all else that should go on will go on. And he further saw that he best fulfils God's purpose who, without anxiety and impatience, does the duty of the day, and gives himself without stint to the "charities that soothe and heal and bless."

PRAYER

We thank Thee for the patience with which Thy lessons are given and Thy purposes indicated. Help us better to understand that Thou hast put each of us in the place where Thou meanest us to carry on Thy work. Help us to realise the dignity of being fellow-workers with Christ, and that Thou hast given us a special work to do for Thee. Help us ever to seek first the things of Thy kingdom and keep us from allowing any plan of our own to interfere with Thy good and holy will concerning us. May we ever find our chief joy in doing Thy will, and more and more may we feel the love of Christ constraining us.

FORTIETH SUNDAY

"OCCUPY TILL I COME"

"Occupy till I come."—LUKE xix. 13.

"Grant us such grace that we may work Thy will,
And speak Thy words and walk before Thy face,
Profound and calm like waters deep and still—
Grant us such grace."

WE are not to wait until we can do things on a great scale, and attack the evils of human life with elaborate machinery. Our Lord was not a great organiser. He did not busy Himself with forming societies for this, that, and the other charitable work, but "as He passed by" He saw one blind man, and judged this a call sufficiently urgent. Sometimes we feel that, confronted as we are with a whole world full of deep-rooted and

inveterate evils, it is useless giving assistance to an individual here and there. It is like trying to dry up the ocean with a sponge. But we shall never do our part, either to individuals or on a large scale, until we apprehend that it is only through us and others that God works, and that when we pass by a needy person we prevent God's love from reaching him, and disappoint the purpose of God. It was this feeling that imparted to Christ so intense and wakeful an energy. He felt it was God's work He was on earth to do. "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day." He recognised that God was in the world, looking with compassion on all human sorrow, but that this compassion could find expression only through His own instrumentality and that of all other men. We are but the channel through which the inexhaustible source of God's goodness flows to the world; but it is in our power to turn off that flow and prevent its reaching those for whom it was intended. We do less than we ought for our fellow-men until we

believe that we are the bearers of God's gifts to men, and that to however few in number and in however small a way we are the media through which God finds way for His love to men, and that if we refuse to do what we can we disappoint and thwart His love and His purpose of good.

Prayer

Help us to live as those who know that they are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and as those whom Thou hast chosen for Thy service. O God, save us from the sin of leaving Christ's cause to perish through our neglect. Oh, give us more of the spirit of Christ. Help us to walk more closely in the footsteps of our Master, ever doing Thy will, ever ready to do good as Thou givest us opportunity.

FORTY-FIRST SUNDAY

THE BREAD OF LIFE—GOD SHARING WITH US

"The Bread of Life."—JOHN vi. 35.
"Lord, evermore give us this bread."—JOHN vi. 34.

THE same law seems to hold good of our physical and of our spiritual life. We cannot sustain physical life except by using as food that which has been alive. The nutritive properties of the earth and the air must have been assimilated for us by living plants and animals before we can use them. And so with spiritual nutriment. Abstract truth we can make little of at first hand; it needs to be embodied in a living form before we can live upon it. It is when the Word becomes flesh, when the hidden reason of all things

takes human form and steps out on the earth before us, that truth becomes nutritive and God our life.

Explicitly Christ says: "The bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." For it is in this great act of dying that He becomes the Bread of Life. God sharing with us to the uttermost; God proving that His will is our righteousness; God bearing our sorrows and our sins; God coming into our human race, and becoming a part of its history—all this is seen in the Cross of Christ; but it is also seen that absolute love for men and absolute submission to God were the moving forces of Christ's life. He was obedient even unto death. This was *His* life, and by the Cross He made it ours. The Cross subdues our hearts to Him, and gives us to feel that self-sacrifice is the true life of man.

We seek to worship Thee in simplicity through Jesus Christ, accepting Him as the image of the invisible God, the true revealer of Thee the Father. May we enter into that real communion with Him by which we become members of Christ. May we feel this unity to be most real—a unity whose root is love and therefore the best, which is eternal, and identifies us in all things with Him. And may we feel a full and implicit trust in Thee for the supply of every want of our souls, bodies, and spirits.

FORTY-SECOND SUNDAY

THE BREAD DISPENSED THROUGH OUR MEANS

"Freely ye have received, freely give."—MATTHEW x. 8.
"Without money and without price."—ISAIAH lv. 1.

THE life Christ gives is Himself, but He gives it through the instrumentality of men. The bread is His. The disciples may manipulate it as they will, but it remains five loaves only. None but He can relieve the famishing multitude. Still, not with His own hands does He feed them, but through the believing service of the Twelve. It was the natural and fit order then, as it is the natural and fit order now, that they who themselves believe in the power of the Lord to feed the world should be the means of

distributing what He gives. Each of the disciples received from the Lord no more than would satisfy himself, yet held in His hand what would through the Lord's blessing satisfy a hundred besides. And it is a grave truth we here meet, that every one of us who has received life from Christ has thereby in possession what may give life to many other human souls. We may give it or we may withhold it; we may communicate it to the famishing souls around us or we may hear unconcerned the weary, heart-faint sigh; but the Lord knows to whom He has given the bread of life, and He gives it not solely for our own consumption but for distribution. It is not the privilege of the more enlightened or more fervent disciple, but of all. He who receives from the Lord what is enough for himself holds the lives of some of his fellows in his hands.

Forgive us that, Thou having done so much for us and so lavishly and ungrudgingly sacrificed for us, we should have been so backward, so timorous, so irresponsive. Forgive our foolishness, our carelessness, about Thy purpose, our unfaithfulness to Thy interests. Forgive us that we have come to Thee for so little, that we are so different from what we might have been if we had taken Thee at Thy word and believed that Thou wert able to make us partakers of Thy fulness and fellow-workers with Thee. Give us a simpler faith, and help us to depend on Thee more for all we need, believing that it is by Thy power alone we can effect anything.

FORTY-THIRD SUNDAY

COMING TO CHRIST

"Let him that is athirst come."—REVELATION xxii. 17.
"Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."—JOHN vi. 37.

HOW are we to avail ourselves of the life that is in Christ? As the Jews asked, *How* can this man give us His flesh to eat? Our Lord Himself uses several terms to express the acts by which we make use of Him as the Bread of Life. "He that believeth on Me," "He that cometh to Me," "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life." Each of these expressions has its own significance. Belief must come first—belief that Christ is sent to give us life; belief that it depends upon our connection with that One Person whether we shall or shall not have life eternal. We must also "come to Him." The people He

was addressing had followed Him for miles, and had found Him and were speaking to Him, but they had not *come* to Him. To come to Him is to approach Him in spirit, and with submissive trust; it is to commit ourselves to Him as our Lord; it is to rest in Him as our all; it is to come to Him with open heart, accepting Him as He claims to be; it is to meet the eye of a present, living Christ, who knows what is in man, and to say to Him, "I am Thine, Thine most gladly, Thine for evermore."

Prayer

O Thou, who art the God of all grace, enable us now to come in simplicity and with all our heart, to Thee who art the Fountain of Life. Help us to accept the life that is offered to us in Christ Jesus, and to realise the great things that are given us in Him. Especially may we believe that the life He lived in communion with Thee may be ours also, a life forgiven, at peace, an energetic and hopeful fulfilment of God's will.

FORTY-FOURTH SUNDAY

CHRIST DOES NOT COME TO THOSE WHO DO NOT WAIT FOR HIM

"If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" —JUDGES vi. 13.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear."—PSALM lxvi. 18.

GIDEON was waiting for God to work and beginning to speak somewhat bitterly of God's indifference. But how could God come to a people who were unprepared to receive Him? God was waiting for him to work. He was right in arguing, "What God was, He is; why, then, does He not do for us what He did for our fathers?" But he was wrong in thinking that the fault lay with God, and not with himself. Just so we are

right in refusing to accept a religion which makes no practical difference upon us; but we often add to this the mistake of Gideon, and fall out with God for not interfering more powerfully in our behalf, when it is we ourselves who are preventing Him from so interfering. You wait for God to do something while He is waiting for you. If you are not able to use God's strength, if you might as well be heathen for all the moral help you get from God, then depend upon it there is something wrong in your conduct towards God, some plain duty you are neglecting.

Prayer

Forgive us our misspent time, our wasted energy, as we let week after week and year after year pass without making the changes we own to be necessary. Deliver us from the idle persuasion that we may neglect the means of grace, and Thy calls, and Thy love without doing ourselves any serious injury. We thank Thee that Thou hast made Thyself the great

necessity to us; that Thou hast made us so that we cannot do our duty to Thee without first being the objects of Thy love; that Thou hast as our faithful Creator bound Thyself to give us many blessings, to cherish us with Thy love. We believe that in Jesus Christ Thou hast given us Thy best and what is best for us; we believe that for our salvation and for our guidance and peace in life and for our spiritual well-being we need no more than is already given in Him.

FORTY-FIFTH SUNDAY

HOW WE MAY HELP MEN

"Chosen that ye may bring forth fruit."

"So did I win a kingdom—share my crown,
A harvest—come and reap."

CHRIST represented the Father not mechanically, not by getting well off by rote the task His Father had set Him, not by a studied imitation, but by being Himself of one mind with the Father, by loving a blind man, for instance, just as the Father loved him and by doing for him just what the Father would have done for him. We do the works of God when in our measure we do the same, becoming eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, help any way to the helpless. We cannot lay our hand on the diseased and help them,

we cannot give sight to the blind and make a man thus feel, "This is God's power reaching to me; this is God stooping to me and caring for my infirmity"; but we can cause men to feel that God is thinking of them, and has sent help through us to them. If we will only be humble enough to run the risk of failure, and of being held cheap, if we will only in sincerity take by the hand those who are ill-off and strive to better them, then these persons will think of God gratefully, or if they do not, there is no better way of making them think of God; for it was Christ's way, who had rarely need to add much explanation of His kind deeds, but, letting them speak for themselves, heard the people giving God the glory. If men can be induced to believe in the love of their fellow-men, they are well on the road to believe in the love of God. And even though it should *not* be so, though all *our* endeavours to help men should fail to make them think of God as their helper, Who has sent us and all help to them, yet we have helped them, and

some at least of God's love for these suffering people has got itself expressed through us. God has got at least a little of His work done, has in one direction stopped the spread of evil.

Prayer

O Thou who didst come not be ministered unto but to minister, and to give Thy life a ransom for many, may we be willing to be as Thou wert in the world, and be ready for every service to which Thou mayest call us. Save us from making our own comfort a chief aim in life. Give us light, and enable us so to walk in Thy light that men shall see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

FORTY-SIXTH SUNDAY

NEWNESS OF LIFE

"He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."—PSALM cvii. 9.

HOW are we to receive newness of life? Are we not labouring under some mistake about the way in which we may become holy, or how is it that, being fairly sincere in our desires to live better, we make so little of it? The new life becomes ours by partaking of Christ. It is He that is made to us sanctification. It is *His* life that is to flow and live in us. He is the nourishment of our spirits. And, strange as it may appear, only a small number of Christians believe this, and prefer trying all other kinds of nourishment for their souls. But God brings us ever back

to the truth. Here is Christ, He says, accept Him and be strong. The bread we eat becomes assimilated to us, enters into our blood, and strengthens the different parts of our body. Thus is Christ to be adopted and assimilated by our spirit, and in every part of our nature He produces strength. And when we feel weak, when bad blood shows itself in us, when disease begins we must come back and feed on Christ anew (Rom. vi. 4).

Prayer

We come to Thee with our needs, believing that Thou art able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. We pray Thee to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus. Give us a keener sense of our oneness with Christ, that our safety depends on a living personal union with Christ, that because He lives we shall live also. We thank Thee for the assurance this brings us that one day we shall be holy as Thou art holy; if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God

by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life.

Thou hast given us Thy Son as the great foundation and earnest and treasury of eternal and unbounded provision. If any of us are tried in the matters of this life, teach us that as Thou hast given us the true Bread from heaven, much more wilt Thou give us daily bread.

FORTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY

CALLED WITH A HOLY CALLING

"Hath He marks to lead me to Him,
If He be my Guide?
In His feet and hands are wound-prints,
And His side!"

DO we value purity and the knowledge of God at the price God has paid for it? Who would say from our careful guarding of purity of character, who would reckon from our jealous watchfulness against false and weakening views of God that *we* held in such high esteem what has thus been purchased for us? One would suppose that when we have been taught by the sacrifice of Christ the value God sets upon holiness in us, we should be found living in fear of contagion from the evil of the world and counting ourselves of some

value. But is it so? Have we, in making up our minds as to our intercourse with the world, brought this element into consideration—that our purity is a thing of exceeding value in God's sight, for which He has made great sacrifices?

Prayer

We thank Thee that Thou hast revealed Thy love to us as redeeming love, saving us from all that debases and cleansing us from all defilement. Help us to see in the death of our Redeemer what an evil thing sin is. We desire to be of the same mind as Christ in this matter of sin, so that as He was willing to give His life that sin might be destroyed, we may be willing to yield our lives rather than increase it. We thank Thee that out of our sinful state Thy wisdom and mercy have brought a greater glory to Thee, a richer blessedness to ourselves, than if we had not sinned.

May we have clearer views of Thy holiness, and see more distinctly how it bears upon ours,

remembering that Thou callest us to be one with Thee, and that Thou givest us Thy Holy Spirit. We thank Thee that we are not more bound to be holy than Thou art to make us holy. Show us how we may please Thee better, and help us to choose before all things to be faithful to Thee.

FORTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

"I am the Light of the world."—JOHN viii. 12.
"Ye are the light of the world."—MATTHEW v. 14.
"Shine as lights."—PHILEMON ii. 15.

IF we wish to shine so as to help and guide others, if we see the need of being and doing more than hitherto, then what we must in the first place do is to allow ourselves to be so swayed by Christ as to be drawn into true sympathy with the Father, and to be possessed by Christ's views of life and by His disposition. In point of fact it is thus we receive the Spirit of God. Let a man recognise what life is given him for, let him recognise how far short his life has been from accomplishing the great objects of life, let him in the shame of having been found unworthy

of the trust God has given him, and in the consciousness of having defiled and unfitted himself for God's service, turn to God for pardon, cleansing, and strength; let him see the possibilities of good that remain to him, let the idea of a life spent for God and for good possess him, and let him believe Christ's offer to give him such life, and that man will receive the very strength he needs and will yet shine with the light of Christ.

Prayer

Give us grace to believe that in Thy service is the only true liberty of Thy creatures, their only happiness and wisdom—that thou hast a work for each of us, and that in all that Thou givest us to do thou art ready to give us all needed strength and wisdom. Even when conscious that we have unfitted ourselves for Thy work, that we are indeed dead in trespasses and sins—yet we believe that Thou canst vitalise us, bringing us to that real faith in Christ and reliance on Him which will

FIFTIETH SUNDAY

FIRST COMMUNION

"What then? For all my sins His pardoning grace,
For all my wants and woes His lovingkindness,
For darkest hours the shining of His face,
And Christ's own hand to lead me in my blindness."

ARE you realising its infinite importance, that this Person who has this day been given to you will throughout your whole future be giving you joy; that He to whom you are now connected will always henceforth claim you as His, to defend you and bless you, to use you and enrich you. This is to be the main thread, the grand element, of all your future history, that you are connected with Christ—it is this that is to regulate your destiny hereafter, and this that should regulate your conduct here. Begin, then, at

once and *use* Christ. If God has given Him to you to be the closest and most useful to you, be simple with God and accept this His grace. Christ says, He is not ashamed to call us brethren; use Him, then, as you would a wise and loving brother, use Him as one who has grown up by you and knows you better than you know yourself. Confide in Him, tell Him your confidences, let your heart out to Him in expressions of love and praise, and tell Him also when your heart is dead and dull. Let Him have reason to know that you prize His company, and when you seek intercourse with Him let Him see that you understand His grace and wealth by the frankness of your confessions and by the greatness of your demands. Think there is something wrong with you when you cannot lay your hand on this and that, and say, "This I have because Christ loves me; this is His gift; this is His doing." Try and win a deeper place than common in His love, and resolve to show in your case what a human soul may reach by quietly dwelling

in the love of Christ, by returning again and again to this thought that Christ died for you and is yours, until this becomes the spring of your life.

Prayer

Bring us into closer and more affectionate, more absolutely confiding, relations to Thee. May we feel how safe and blessed we are in Thy keeping and under Thy government. And may we eagerly accept Thy government as that expression of Thy will by which Thou wouldst lead us to the highest good. May we never forget or lose sight of what we have in Him who has loved us and given Himself for us.

FIFTY-FIRST SUNDAY

"BECAUSE I LIVE, YE SHALL LIVE ALSO"

"The faith of immortality depends on a sense of it begotten, not on an argument for it concluded."

IT was more than ordinary grief or sympathy that was the fountain of the tears of Jesus. He was in sympathy with the mourners, and felt for them, but there was that in the whole scene with which He had no sympathy; there was none of that feeling He required His disciples to show at His own death, no rejoicing that one more had gone to the Father. There was a forgetfulness of the most essential facts of death, an unbelief which seemed entirely to separate this crowd of wailing people from the light and life of God's presence. "It was the darkness between

God and His creatures that gave room for, and was filled with, their weeping and wailing over their dead." It was the deeper anguish into which mourners are plunged by looking upon death as extinction, and by supposing that death separates from God and from life, instead of giving closer access to God and more abundant life—it was this which caused Jesus to groan. He could not bear this evidence that even the best of God's children do not believe in God as greater than death and in death as ruled by God.

This gives us the key to Christ's belief in immortality. It was Christ's sense of God, His uninterrupted consciousness of God, His distinct knowledge that God the loving Father is *the* existence in Whom all live—it was this which made it impossible for Christ to think of death as extinction or separation from God. For one who consciously lived in God to be separated from God was impossible. For one who was bound to God by love to drop out of that love into nothingness or desolation was inconceivable. His constant

and absolute sense of God gave Him an unquestioning sense of immortality. If we ask why it was impossible He should have any shadow of doubt of a life beyond death, we see that it is because it was impossible for Him to doubt of the existence of God, the ever-living, ever-loving God.

Prayer

O Lord, we know that Thou desirest to be our support and comfort in every time of our need and sorrow. Help us now to admit the comfort Thy presence and Thy sympathy bring. In the time of our anguish we think no comfort is possible; and yet we would acknowledge that in Thy fatherly love Thou hast provided for us relief and even compensation. Thou hast taught us to look at life and not at death as the eternal thing. Lead us, we now beseech Thee, to the Fountain of Life.

FIFTY-SECOND SUNDAY

MORTALITY SWALLOWED UP OF LIFE

"To fall asleep is not to die;
To dwell with Christ is better life."

RESURRECTION and Life are not blessings laid up for us in a remote future: they are present. When Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again," she answered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," meaning to indicate that this was small consolation. What comfort did the vague and remote hope of reunion after long ages of untold change bring? But this is not the comfort Christ gives Martha. He comforts her, not by pointing her to a far-off event which was vague and remote, but to His own living person,

whom she knew, saw, and trusted. And He assured her that in Him were resurrection and life; that all, therefore, who belonged to Him were uninjured by death, and had in Him a present and continuous life.

The thought of immortality is with Christ involved in and absorbed by the thought of life. Life is a present thing, and its continuance a matter of course. It is life, therefore, rather than immortality Christ speaks of. Eternal life He defines, not as a future continuance to be measured by ages, but as a present life to be measured by its depth. Life prolonged without being deepened by union with the living God were no boon. Life with God and in God must be immortal; life without God He does not call life at all.

In evidence of this present continued life Lazarus was called back and shown to be still alive. In Him the truth of Christ's words was exemplified: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Dissolution may pass on his

body, but not on his life. His life is hid with Christ in God; it is united to the unfailing Source of all existence.

Prayer

O Thou who art the Resurrection and the Life, in Whom whosoever believeth shall live though he die, lead us to that vital and satisfying connection with Thee which shall give us the victory over death. Thou settest Thyself before us as our Life. Lord, help us to find our life in Thee.

FIFTY-THIRD SUNDAY

VICTORY OVER DEATH

"All journeys end in welcome to the weary,
And heaven, the heart's true home, will come at last."

DEATH is a subject of universal concern. Every man must have to do with it, and in its presence every man feels his helplessness. Nowhere do we so come to the limit and end of our power as at the door of a vault. There is the clay, but who shall find the spirit that dwelt in it? Jesus has no such sense of weakness. Believing in the fatherly and undying love of the Eternal God, He knows that death cannot harm, still less destroy, the children of God. In this belief He commands back to the body the soul of Lazarus; through the ear of that dead

and laid-aside body He calls to His friend, and bids him from the unseen world. Surely we also may say, with Himself, we are glad that He was not with Lazarus in his sickness, that we might have this proof that not even death carries the friend of Christ beyond His reach and power.

There is no one who can afford to look at this scene with indifference. We have all to die, to sink into utter weakness past all strength of our own, past all friendly help of those around us. It must always remain a trying thing to die. And if it is really true that Jesus did raise Lazarus, then a world of depression and fear and grief is lifted off the heart of man. That very assurance is given to us which we most of all need. If Christ raised Lazarus, He has a power to which we can safely trust, and life is a thing of permanence and joy.

For every sorrowful and burdened spirit we pray, for all who leave behind them in newly-made graves former loved companions, and much of the joy and hope of life, that they may see more clearly that our true home is in the unseen, and may flee for refuge and comfort to the Forerunner who for us has entered within the veil. In every death may we see the fulfilment of Thy promise, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself."

"Oh, what is death? 'Tis life's last shore,
Where vanities are vain no more,
Where all pursuits their goal obtain,
And life is all retouched again."

PULPIT PRAYERS

PULPIT PRAYERS

I

O LORD, we thank Thee for this day: it is Thy gift —it is made for man and secured to us by events that humble us and make us thankful. We would use it as in the presence of Him who died and rose again for us; we would use it gratefully, seriously, hopefully. We thank Thee that Thou hast made Thyself the great necessity to us, that Thou hast made us so that we cannot do our duty to Thee without first being the objects of Thy love; that Thou hast as our faithful Creator bound Thyself to give us many blessings, to cherish us with Thy love. We believe that in Jesus Christ Thou hast given us Thy best and what is best for us: we believe that in Him the salvation of all who believe is secure, and that for our guidance and peace in life, and for our proper spiritual wellbeing we need no more than is already given in Him. We thank Thee for such beginnings of love to Christ as we have, and we pray that our love may grow. May it be as cordial and true,

as joyful and fruitful, as our love to any one now on earth. And desiring as we do to love Christ, may we be disposed to do all that is likely to increase our love—may we be much with Him, may we do much for Him. May our hearts be so wholly won by Him that it shall be our joy to serve Him, even in circumstances not in themselves joyful. Thou hast made us so that we crave for joy—fill us with Thy joy. Establish us in the belief of Thy perfect righteousness, that what is right Thou hast ever done and wilt ever do, that none of Thy works has been short of perfectly holy, that nothing has been omitted by Thee which could have conferred greater blessedness on Thy creatures. Enable us to believe that Thou rulest and that as Thy sceptre is a right sceptre happiness and well-being shall endure if we be on Thy side, misery and evil-doing pass away. Show us how we may please Thee better, and help us to choose before all things to be faithful to Thee.

II

O LORD, who alone knowest what is right to be thought concerning Thee, and who canst alone teach them who are ignorant and out of the way, grant to us now Thy Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Thee. Remove and keep far from us all misconceptions of Thy character, all mis-

understandings of Thy purpose regarding us and of Thy dealings with us, that we may be altogether satisfied with Thee for our portion and be thoroughly humbled before Thy goodness. Grant us a deeper sense, a clearer knowledge, an adoring spirit. Show us something of Thy wealth, and something of Thy willingness to give, that we may understand the importance of Thy gifts and the grace of Thine offers. We acknowledge the riches of Thy promises, that they are exceeding great and precious, that when we have sunk to our worst and deepest we could not find place for despair. Thy promise has still been with us—rich, full, free, clear, inevitable. When our thoughts have risen to the highest heaven and our hopes done their utmost, we have not exceeded nor surpassed Thy promise. And in the goodness already enjoyed we see earnest of the fulfilment of Thy promises. Thou hast been ever with us as if, forgetful of all else, we only had been the objects of Thy care; Thou hast daily loaded us with appropriate benefits as if none else were receiving at Thy hand; Thou hast led us by a way suited to our character as if our interests only had been considered. We thank Thee that Thou wilt not be content with anything that does not perfectly fulfil Thy perfect love and purpose. Oh, help us so truly to believe this that we shall feel our life encompassed by Thee, that we shall at all times feel the blessedness of dependence on Thee. May our

trust in Thee be so real that we shall set about carrying out in our daily life those thoughts and plans and purposes which Thy promises beget in us.

III

O LORD, reform our wills, we beseech Thee, and purify our desires, that when we pray to Thee we may not merely ask Thee for things which we know we ought to desire, but for things which are ever floating before our hopes and drawing forth our affections and our efforts, that thus our hearts may not condemn us and that we may have confidence before Thee.

We cannot command Thy presence among us, but Thou hast said, "Seek ye My face," and to none hast Thou said "Seek ye Me" in vain; we cannot command our hearts to awake to the glory of Thy Spirit's operation, nor command that operation, but we come expecting His promised aid. Grant us, O Lord, the fulness of His gracious working, unlimited by our half-heartedness, unmarred by our wanderings of thought and affection. Cast us not from Thy presence, O God, nor take Thy Holy Spirit from us. Our hope is in Thee and all our expectation. We are poor, do Thou enrich us; empty, do Thou fill us with Thy goodness; guilty and wicked, do Thou forgive

and purify. We desire this day to see more of Thy goodness, to realise more of Thy power to bless. May all the blessings of Thy salvation be ours this day, and may the comfort of Thy word prevail in us against all fears and doubts, against the temptations of Satan, against the reproaches of the world.

Help us to master our own spirits, to repress and eradicate all evil tendencies, all discontent and envy, all lust of the world and pride of life, all sloth and fear and vanity, and every kind of weakness. Deliver us from sins and vices that keep us on a low level of character and life, and prevent us from being of much use in the world. May we be more alive to the fact that we have this work to do. Give us pure, loving, hopeful thoughts, and let not our hearts be filled with selfish, unholy, and foolish imaginings. May we suffer our whole life to be penetrated and governed by the Spirit of Christ.

IV

LORD, help us to come before Thee carefully, knowing how great are the things we may ask of Thee, and how much it concerns us to receive them. We thank Thee that Thy goodness has created us capable of becoming Thy children, that this life may become

to us the foundation of a perfect blessedness, the beginning of an unending and incorrupt existence. We desire to come to Thee, remembering the great realities which have been enacted for this end. We thank Thee for all we have without our asking, and which no effort of ours could have brought us. We thank Thee for our creation, for the finished work of Christ.

We seek to place our life on a Christian foundation—to be more one with Christ. We do indeed desire that our hearts may be wholly at one with Jesus Christ, that He may find pleasure in us and see in us of the travail of His soul. We are ashamed that we should have cared so little for these spirits of ours, for which Thou hast cared so constantly and tenderly and for which Thou hast sacrificed so dearly. We have not been diligent in the use of the means Thou hast provided, and when we have too often we were trusting more to them than to Thy Spirit. We have not yielded ourselves to the influences of Thy Spirit; we have counted it a hard thing to be as Christ was in this world, and have reckoned that the disciple should be above the Master — have been far from sacrificing our own to the good of others, far from letting their necessities frame and guide our lives from day to day. We are very different from what we might have been had we been considerate and walked

wisely—had we been penitent and walked carefully and severely—had we been grateful and walked obediently—had we been faithful and walked trustfully, had we been willing and waiting to receive as Thou hast been willing and waiting to give—had we spent in Thy service the time and strength, the thought and effort, we have spent on what has all passed away and what we can only remember to reproach ourselves with. Link us to Thyself, we beseech Thee, and imbue us with Thy Spirit, that our strongest desires may be towards those very things which Thou seekest. Grant us sympathy with all who suffer, compassion for all who are weak, anxiety for those who are out of the way, charity towards all.

Help those who are in sorrow to endure—to see that there are qualities and dispositions which nothing but sorrow and failure can work in them ; to believe that even if their trouble is the result of sin or folly of their own, yet Thou wilt make it work their eternal good.

Help us to bear with meekness, with courage, and with hopefulness the privations, the pains, the anxieties, the disappointments of life. Enable us to make full use of all Thou hast given us for our encouragement. May we make sure of Thy friendship and live in the persuasion that our destiny depends on Thee and not on this world.

Save us from the things we fear, but if they come upon us grant us strength to bear them without sinking under the burden.

V

O LORD, Thou hast said that if we confess our sins Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Help us, therefore, now to confess, sincerely and utterly, as those who expect pardon, not punishment. We acknowledge that we have lived as if we had no God, believing little, expecting little, loving little, obeying little. Especially we have not believed that our natures would be changed, have believed often that as we have been born so we must remain, have become resigned to our sins instead of hopefully striving against them, and have not counted that there was much concern with Thee whether we continued in sin or accepted Thy salvation. Thy will has been made known to us and we have seen every reason for doing it, and been offered sufficient help for its performance, and yet we have sinned. Thou hast never ceased to deal tenderly with us, hast shown us evidently the great evil and folly of forsaking Thee, and yet we have sinned. Our own desires have led us. The most passing impulse, the

merest habit, has been powerful enough to overcome our inclination to serve Thee. We have suffered other persons and things to usurp the place due to Thee alone, and have let Them regulate our conduct, sometimes against Thy will, often at least in competition with Thy will.

We have sinned before others and led them into sin, from which we cannot now reclaim them ; we have missed opportunities of reclaiming those we might have helped. We have sinned with others and confirmed them in sin.

We would not dare to come unto Thee unless we knew that Thou hast prepared a way for us and bidden us come. If Thou wilt Thou canst make us clean. Remember not against us former iniquities ; let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy Name ; deliver us and purge away our sins for Thy Name's sake.

We thank Thee that the invitations of the gospel do not suppose us to be righteous, do not suppose us to be any better than we actually are, but invite us with all our infirmities, sins, inconsistencies, propensities to evil. Establish between our souls and Christ a fuller confidence. May we know more of His power to save from sin ; may we experience that His salvation is a complete provision for every want, applicable in all circumstances.

Forbid that we should come to the end of life and find that we have done nothing for Christ. Make our love for Him more real, and give us greater boldness, promptitude, and wisdom in speaking of Him to men.

VI

O God, what is man that Thou art mindful of us or the son of man that Thou visitest us? We are but of yesterday, and at our best estate vanity. We have sinned also.

We have loved and still incline to that which Christ hated with irreconcilable hatred—our life has much been spent in that which He gave His life to destroy. We thank Thee that Thou hast made known Thy love as redeeming love, saving us from all that debases and cleansing from all defilement. We thank Thee that Thou hast given us enough to guide and steady us in life, enough to enable us to come victorious out of all its conflicts, to save us from its moral defilement, and to uphold us in its sorrows and disappointments.

We recognise Thy goodness in making *this* the promise which should satisfy all expectation, even that Thou shouldst dwell with men and make of us Thy people. We thank Thee that in Christ it has been fulfilled more richly than the most hopeful of

Thy people could have anticipated. And we thank Thee that now He has withdrawn His visible presence to make room for the Spirit. May we cordially believe that we can find more help in the Spirit's presence than in the bodily presence of Christ. We pray for Thy Spirit. Help us to appreciate the full joy of a state in which we are brought into closest contact with Thee. May we feel that no higher, truer joy could be offered, and may we be strengthened to choose this as that which we ourselves most earnestly desire. Remove all misconceptions about Thyself. Remove all love of sin. Help us in our own life to realise the kingdom of God, a state in which we serve Thee wholly. Let not this be a vision of unattainable goodness, but the state we actually strive towards. Show us what a healthy spiritual life is, and begin it in ourselves. We desire to thank Thee for the training we receive in this life and the knowledge we acquire of the great moral laws under which human life is placed. Help us rightly to interpret our own experience, that we may neither on the one hand think Thy grace is vain and salvation a dream, nor on the other hand be satisfied with the attainment we have already made, and suppose we have received all Thy grace.

VII

O God, we thank Thee for the light of this new day, and for Thy preserving care of us during the past night. We have slept and we have waked because Thou hast sustained us. Renew within us, we pray Thee, earnestness of purpose. Help us to remember there is a purpose in life. We confess we have used the world for aims the very opposite of those for which it was intended.

We who cannot comprehend Thy nature have yet judged Thee, have put our own constructions on Thy dealings, have ascribed to Thee the failings, the artifices, the evils of man. We, who could not comprehend Thy plan though it were all revealed, have murmured and disputed, have not been trustful children. We have done this who are of yesterday, and know nothing.

By Him whom Thou hast given as our ensample we discern our faults. In Him we see no murmuring, no impatience, no disobedience, no seeking easy paths, no indolence, no passing by of others' misery, no exulting over others' sin, no attempts to reconcile good and evil. Help us to become truly Christ's followers. Lead us to Him, teach us to glory in Him. Give us an increasing persuasion of the rightness and reasonableness of living to Him. May our fellowship with Him be more real, may He be that one who

has most influence with us. May we understand and sympathise with His work more and more. Help us to yield ourselves to Him, to fall in with Thy purpose in the world, and to find our happiness in accomplishing it. Help us in our efforts to live righteously ourselves and to lead others to do so. Give us simplicity, intelligence, boldness in our intercourse with others. Disentangle us from difficulties about our spiritual state, that we may be free to live a strong, influential Christian life. Help us in the work we undertake, that we may not seem to do no good in the world and to spend our strength for naught. Direct our endeavours to what is most needful, and guide us to such methods as are likely to be successful. Help us to believe that Thou sendest none a-warring on his own charges, but that Thou wilt supply us with the zeal, the charity, the perseverance, the wisdom, that are needed.

VIII

We thank Thee that Thou, the invisible, infinite God, hast in Jesus Christ revealed Thyself as a Person—hast made Thyself accessible to us. We thank Thee for the solace and strength and hope Thou bringest to the hearts of men by giving them to know Thee and to lean upon Thee. Help us to come before Thee

with thankfulness, with gladness, with expectation, with simplicity, with penitence. Lift us out of indifference, take away our pride, that will not submit to Thee till things are as we would have them ; remove our carnality which refuses to accept holiness, and makes us feel hypocritical whenever we ask Thee for it.

Encourage us, help us to think rightly of Thee. Increase our faith by revealing Thyself to us. Command our thoughts, and assert Thine authority and prove Thy power over our spirits.

May holiness have a new attraction for us. May we see with increasing clearness the significance of Christ's life and death, and may there grow up between us and Him a confidence and a friendship which nothing can destroy. We have often forgotten what we owe to Him, and have lived as if without Him we could do something and make something of life, as if all His sacrifice were needless, all His interference in vain, all His arrangement of His kingdom meaningless. Enlarge our thoughts of Thee and of Thy purposes. Let not our life be spent on frivolities, on self, but may some good thing result to others from our action. Help us to lead a strong, upright, Christian life, not daunted by difficulties, not allured by appeals to sense, not perplexed by needless scruples. Thou knowest what is the conflict with each of us, where the heat of the battle is,

where we are really tempted and tried. Renew within us day by day earnestness of purpose, and help us to cherish good aims until we attain them. Without Thee, the perennial source of goodness, what could we do? Without the living God, the ever-springing, eternally renewed love and purity superior to all contempt and hatred, and all temptation, what could we hope? Our hope is in Thee. We are unstable, but Thou art steadfast; we are indifferent, but Thou art in earnest, as willing now to fulfil all Thy promises as at first to make them.

IX

O LORD, we desire to thank Thee for the glad and hopeful thoughts with which we may come into Thy presence, for the change which has been wrought in our life by the coming of Christ, for the perfect life He sets before us, and the lifting up of our thoughts to Thee. We thank Thee for the goodness and mercy which follow us, that we can trust Thy goodness even when its methods are to us unintelligible and painful. We thank Thee for all we have, as creatures born into a world full of wonders, adapted to our use and enjoyment, eliciting by the manifold relations of life all that is good in us. We thank Thee for all satisfaction here which opens the heart with gladness,

for all dissatisfaction which prompts us to value and to seek a life beyond. We thank Thee for all among us who can say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction." Above all, we thank Thee for Him in whom all Thy promises are yea and Amen.

With so much to gladden, so much to sustain, so much to enlighten, so much to purify, we should be cleansed and strengthened. With a God untempted and untempting, holy, living for spiritual ends, revealing Himself to us for our encouragement, we should be holy, should see the folly and hurtfulness and wickedness of self-seeking, of worldliness, of all that defeats spiritual purposes.

And yet how far we are removed from the region of thought and feeling and purpose in which Christ lived! How often we are satisfied with mere external advantage, and take too limited a view of the responsibilities and of the opportunities afforded by our position in life! How ready we are to extenuate in ourselves the faults we condemn in others! How slow we are in eradicating our faults, how slow to understand Thy purposes, to understand in how true and full a sense we are Thine! We have not trusted Thee nor shrunk from wounding Thy fatherly feeling by coldness, indifference, sullen unbelief.

But our hope is still in Thee, and while ashamed we

should have done so little in the past, we would come to Thee with hope as well as with shame. May we be able truly to abide in Thee, that our whole characters may be transformed, that our wills may be fashioned in accordance with Thine.

Forgive our misspent time, our wasted energy, and help us to redeem the time, and to live such lives as will forward the coming of Thy kingdom.

X

O LORD, it becomes us to approach Thee with humility. Our life bears unmistakable evidence that Thou hast not been in all our thoughts, that we have been governed by unworthy aims. We have been more afraid of poverty than of worldliness, and have striven more for bodily comfort than for our spiritual welfare. Grant us true repentance. Forgive our slight apprehension of guilt, and the insincerity of our repentances. May we learn to believe in Thee as the truth, and to judge of things as they appear to Thee. May we feel the guilt of sin, and be ashamed of blindly thwarting Thy purposes, doing what hinders the advance of good and stains and degrades our own soul. Forgive our many actual transgressions and our habitual proneness to sin. May we see that great evil in sin which prompted

Christ to die to deliver us from it; in His incarnation may we recognise the sincerity of His sympathy.

Give us more justly to estimate our character and life, and save us from the subtle influences that undermine the character and weaken faith. We have much to contend with, and little in ourselves with which to maintain any steady conflict. But when we become alarmed about our character, when we begin to wonder whether for us there is any true possibility of finding our joy in holiness and self-sacrifice, enable us to believe in the reality and efficiency of Christ's salvation. May we be willing to open our whole nature to His love. We come to Thee for renewal and quickening. May none of us feel it to be enough to know our sins without strenuously endeavouring to subdue them. May we in no particular be found perpetuating the wrongs, the miseries, the falsities, the weakness, the vice which mar human life, but may we be the instruments to forward its redemption.

May no experience through which we pass blunt our sensibilities; may none make us uncharitable, contemptuous, self-engrossed, worldly; may none separate us from our fellows in pride or hatred.

Grant to all of us more real contentment to be Thy servants, more glad and hearty approval of Thy will, more joy in Thy service.

XI

THOU hast made all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created. Thou art our God and all that we have is Thine—our life, our breath, and all things. All station, influence, wealth, ability, success, advantages, hopes, all are of Thee. And we lay them at Thy feet, desiring that Thou wouldst enable each one of us, contradicting the dictates of our own hearts, to consecrate ourselves to Thee and thus lay the right foundation for our lives. We thank Thee if Thou hast taught any of us to live cheerfully and confidently, not because we have so much of our own, but because we are ourselves Thine. We thank Thee that Thou hast taught us to choose Thee as our inheritance and portion, and to believe that when all those things in which we now delight shall have passed away Thou remainest able to give us higher and better things, opening still Thyself as the dwelling-place of Thy people in all generations. We thank Thee that all the beauty of this world, the greatest and most godlike of Thy works, are but types of higher and enduring works. The years have brought forth their beauty and wealth for our enjoyment, and have waned for our warning. They pass, but Thou remainest.

May we have clearer views of Thy holiness, and see more distinctly how it bears upon ours, remem-

bering that Thou callest us to be one with Thee, and that Thou givest Thy Holy Spirit. We thank Thee that we are not more bound to be holy than Thou art to make us holy. Show us how we may please Thee better and help us to choose before all things to be faithful to Thee.

We come before Thee with varied wants, but add Thy presence and we shall be complete in Thee. Fulfil our petitions and supply all our need through Him who is Head over all things, who holds at command all earthly blessings, and all spiritual influences for the good of His people. Coming in meagre faith, may we be strengthened by seeing Thee; coming with sin, may we go forgiven and cleansed; coming with some weariness in well-doing, or indifference to advance farther and abound more in good works, may we go from Thy presence strong in the Lord; coming with less than proper contentment with our lot, may we go, satisfied that what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

XII

GIVE us desire and power to realise Thy presence. Persuade us all of Thy love, not as man speaks of it to man, but as Thou by the instruction of Thy Spirit can tell us of it; that we may know Thy

love as it is, and be glad to abide in it for evermore. Go deeply into the reasons in us for refusing Thy help and remove all our misunderstandings of Thy purpose, of the way of Thy salvation, of the end to which Thou desirest to bring us that we may own Thee as our Lord and our God. And whilst we own Thee, do Thou, Lord, also own us, claim us authoritatively as Thine—soul, body, and spirit; that the bodies we have used as instruments of unrighteousness may now become Thy servants, no longer to be the slaves of sin but to be educated to holiness. And as we have known the hard service of sin, so may we now know the joy of being claimed by Thee and begin to experience the blessedness of Thy service.

God of all grace, who didst from the beginning promise Thy Son to break the serpent's head, help us to more true devotedness. We have to confess that while He has done so much we have done little. We have been conscious of shortcoming, have recognised and approved a better life than that we have actually lived. We have known to do good and have not done it. Lead us, we beseech Thee, in a right way. Keep us from falling into sluggish indifference or callous worldliness. Forbid that we should ever think of life as a mere spending of time; may we believe in Thy purpose, and that in Christ Jesus Thou hast made provision inexhaustible for every part of our nature and for the need of all

Thy creatures. Help us to remember that there is always a right thing to be done, and a right way of living through this present time, and that Thou art always willing and desirous to enable us to make the most of our service of Thee. If we are engaging in occupations which do evil and not good, show us our mistakes, and preserve us from turning useful occupations and pursuits into evil. May we see how to accomplish the good we would do, without fretting, but quietly, steadily, hopefully, as those who know that Thou art with them.

XIII

O LORD, help us to feel that in coming into Thy presence we are coming into the presence of the Highest of all, by whose power all things were made, and by whose will all things abide as they are. Help us to come with reverence and godly fear, and grant us a sense of Thy reality, of Thy power, of Thy holiness, of Thy nearness to us, and of Thy right over us. We would praise Thee that Thou hast called us to union with Thyself—that we may aim at an eternal life full of glory, honour, and service, and we pray Thee to help us that we may count the main use of this world to be our preparation and blessed opportunity for becoming fit for another.

We thank thee that Thou hast not suffered us to go forward in ignorance, in utter darkness, with our consciences raising all fears for the future, but hast assured us of eternal favour and hast provided us with all that can uphold us in this our preparatory course.

We thank Thee that in order to raise us out of this our lost estate Thy Son should have stooped down and become partaker of our sorrow, and bearer of our sins ; should have become one of us, connecting Himself with us, not for a little while only, but eternally, not to bring us a little on our way and leave us, but having loved us He loves us to the end.

We thank Thee for the patience with which Thy lessons are given and Thy purposes indicated. Help us better to understand that Thou hast put each of us in the place where Thou meanest us to carry on Thy work. Help us to realise the dignity of being fellow-workers with Christ, and that Thou hast given us a special work to do for Thee. Help us ever to seek first the things of Thy kingdom and keep us from allowing any plan of our own to interfere with Thy good and holy will concerning us. May we ever find our chief joy in doing Thy will, and more and more may we feel the love of Christ constraining us.

XIV

O God, we thank Thee for the stated hours of worship, for time fenced off from the intrusion of worldly occupations and preserved for quiet thought and fellowship with Thee. We thank Thee that Thou, the invisible, unsearchable God, hast made Thyself known to us and accessible in Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the eternal solace and strength Thou bringest to the hearts of men, by giving them to know Thee and to lean upon Thee. We thank Thee that Thou hast made Thyself known as our faithful Creator, who hast not ushered us into a life Thou art not prepared to bless, but art with us throughout it, sufficient for all our necessities, able to bring us through all temptations, patiently waiting till we recognise Thy goodness and learn to love Thee. We thank Thee that Thou hast taught us that as in temporal things it is in Thee we live, so in things spiritual we are expected to find our sufficiency in Thee.

We find it difficult to maintain upon our spirits a just sense of what we owe to Jesus Christ—to persevere in the use of those outward means of grace which we believe to be appointed and blessed by Thee, to forsake habits which we know to be contrary to Thy will and the health of our souls, and the evil effects of which we continually experience.

Save us from the subtle influences that undermine the character and weaken faith. O Lord, we have great need and little faith. As Thou hast given us promises corresponding to our need, so grant us faith corresponding to Thy promises. Preserve us from our variableness and contentment to remain variable. Grant that we may remember and rest upon Thine unchangeable grace.

Grant to Thy ministering servants the meekness of wisdom, help them to proclaim with power the gracious Gospel of our blessed Lord. May our Saviour be glorified this day in sinners being turned to Thee and in Thy people being built up in Thy most holy faith.

XV

We thank Thee for Thy goodness, knowing that when we speak of Thy goodness it is but a thousandth part of it we understand. We desire that a deeper sense of it be wrought into our spirits, and that it beget within us a proper confidence in Thee. Be with us now, and grant to us such a sense of Thy presence that the thought of our own littleness and weakness may be lost in Thee, the altogether perfect. May we understand and know that there is a God, and that Thou art He.

Maintain within us all holy desires, all Godward

motions, all warfare against deadness, worldliness, carnality of soul. Give us the liberty of the sons of God, perfectly to approve of Thee and Thy will, to be wholly satisfied with the dominion under which we are, and to delight in all that is required of us, knowing we serve our Father. Enable us to judge of Thy government, its holiness, its wisdom, its benignity, its glory, by the meeting of God with man in Jesus Christ. Enable us to estimate Thy character by it, and to judge what we may expect of Thee by what Thou hast already done for us in Christ.

We are not scrupulous and exact to give Thee what we owe. What Thou givest for Thy service we have not been careful to use for Thee, and yet do rather rebel against the idea of being wholly at Thy disposal and for Thy glory. What is pleasing to Thee we have refused, rebelled against, murmured at. Though sinners and exposed to Thy wrath, we have not felt alarm, nor are we now so grieved and humbled by sin as we ought to be—we do not turn from each sin as having in it the character of that which brought death into the world. Lord Jesus, may we be able so truly to abide in Thee that our whole character shall be transformed, that our will shall be fashioned in accordance with Thine. Make us delight to do Thy will. May those things be hateful to us which are hateful to Thee. Give

us the victory that overcomes the world, that enables us to be in it but not of it, to use it for worthy ends, not to be carried away by its fashions and excitements. In all that we do may we seek to glorify our Father in heaven.

XVI

O GOD, we thank Thee that Thine ear is ever open to our cry, that Thou never turnest away needy ones who come to Thee. Thou knowest, O God, that our need is great, but we rejoice to know that it is not greater than Thou art able to supply. We are ashamed to think that we have not because we ask not. When we think that it is the resources of the Godhead to which Thou givest us access, we are ashamed at the poverty, the carelessness, the thoughtlessness of our requests. We pray Thee to give us that broken and contrite heart which is well pleasing in Thy sight. Give us a heart emptied of self and filled with love to Thee our God and Saviour. In all that we purpose may we set Thee before us. Give us the assurance that all our plans are well pleasing in Thy sight. Save us from self-seeking and self-pleasing. Make us honestly desirous to do Thy will. May we be so filled with Thy Spirit that we shall delight to do Thy will. Give

us such a belief in the truth of Thy promises and the rightness of Thy commandments as will prompt us more earnestly to strive after attaining what Thou hast promised, and more steadily desirous of doing what Thou requirest. May self-indulgence never take the place of Thy commandments. As often as we feel our weakness, our inability to obey Thy commandments, may we derive strength from Thy promises.

Help us to live as those who know that they are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ and as those whom Thou hast chosen for Thy service. O God save us from the sin of leaving Christ's cause to perish through our neglect. Give us more of the Spirit of Christ. Help us to walk more closely, more steadily, in the footsteps of our Master, ever doing Thy will, ever ready to do good as Thou givest us opportunity, and ever well pleased with all Thy good and holy will concerning us.

XVII

O God, teach us to pray. We come to Thee with our needs, believing that Thou art able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. We pray Thee to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus. We need Thee to make

us anew that we may be temples fit for Thee to dwell in.

Give us a keener sense that we are one with Christ, that our safety depends on a living, personal union with Christ, that because He lives we shall live also. We thank Thee for the assurance this brings us that one day we shall be holy as Thou art holy. Help us to strive more earnestly after perfect conformity to Thy will. Keep us in contact with all that promotes this.

Grant us grace to walk as children of light, soberly, purely, honestly, as in the day; keep us this day, we pray Thee, from sin, uphold us when about to fall, lift us up if we have fallen. Suffer us not to continue under any provocation or temptation, or to have our hearts hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Keep us from shrinking or repining at the trials or disappointments of life. Help us at all times and in all circumstances to say "Good is the will of the Lord concerning us." Whether Thou seest meet to send us joy or sorrow, may we have the assurance that both come from our Father, who knows what is best for us.

Guide us, we pray Thee, in all our worldly affairs, in the steps we take, the customs we adopt, the society we choose. Help us more adequately to discharge our ordinary duties. Impart to us the state of mind which

may enable us to do so. Give us the meekness of wisdom, loving-kindness, patience.

XVIII

O GOD, we thank Thee for Thy preserving care of us. We pray Thee to make us realise more constantly our dependence upon Thee for health of body and mind, and for all we need. O God, increase our faith. May we at all times believe that Thou requirest of us nothing that Thy almighty power is not able to accomplish in us. Give us such a belief in the truth of Thy promises and the rightness of Thy commandments as will prompt us more earnestly to strive after obtaining what Thou hast promised and more steadily desirous of doing what Thou requirest.

May we live more entirely upon Christian motives, and in a Christian atmosphere, letting our thoughts and feelings be elevated and sanctified and softened by continual contact with the love of Christ. Lead us clear of all self-deception and dulness of understanding. May we recognise the requirements, the aims, the scope, the aids, of the Christian life. May the faith of Christ take firmer hold of us, may our minds be more satisfied, our feelings more entirely engaged, our life more absolutely devoted. We thank Thee

that Thou puttest it within the reach of every one to make his life worthy and satisfying.

We are ashamed that Thou having done so much for us, and so lavishly and ungrudgingly sacrificed for us, we should have been so backward, so timorous, so irresponsible. Forgive our foolishness, our carelessness about Thy purpose, our unfaithfulness to Thy interests. We come to Thee for renewal and strengthening.

Those troubles we cannot remove from our life do Thou help us to bear with fortitude and in such a temper that we shall be the better for them. Consider the defeated, the desolate, the burdened, the perplexed, the tempted, all who suffer from unknown and unshared sorrows. May those who are called on to bear the burden of others recognise that a life of service is better than a life of ease.

XIX

We think with joy of the great multitude who awake this morning to praise Thee, whose hearts are rejoicing in Thy works, and whose mouths are filled with thankful acknowledgment of Thy goodness. Thou makest summer and winter. As Thou renewest the face of the earth, and causest it to bring forth, so shine on us with the light of Thy countenance and

gladden us inwardly with the shining of the Sun of righteousness. And grant that in the joy of the Lord we may find our strength, and be filled with grace to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

We thank Thee that as the sunshine and air have not to be worked for, but only received, so Thy favour is free.

We thank Thee for Thy watchful care of us. We pray Thee to keep us from being careless or indifferent to Thy words of Truth. Give us grace to set our hearts to understand Thy merciful dealings with us. Keep us, O God, from taking matters into our own hand, instead of waiting to be led and guided by Thee. Help us truly and simply to trust Thee. Make us alive to the fact that Thou hast given each one of us a work to do for Thee, and that Thou hast placed us where we can best carry on Thy work. We thank Thee that Thou requirest nothing that Thy grace will not fit us to do. Thou knowest our weakness, our ignorance, our sinfulness, better than we know it ourselves, and yet Thou hast chosen us for Thy service. Help us ever to seek first the things of Thy kingdom. Keep us from allowing any plan of our own to interfere with Thy good and holy will concerning us. May we ever find our chief joy in doing Thy will, and may the thought of Thy great love to us in Christ Jesus so fill our hearts that we shall ever feel it constraining us to love Thee more and serve Thee better.

XX

LORD, teach us to trust Thee. We know that there is every reason to trust Thee, but it is a hard battle to which Thou hast called some of us, and we need Thy help lest we be moved away from the beginning of our confidence. May Thy Spirit therefore be at hand to point out to us and to impress upon us the reasons there are for trusting Thee, that we may never be beaten down so low as to forget that Thou art on our side. May He remind us that Thou art the unchangeable God, from everlasting to everlasting, a sufficient centre for the faith of all that Thou hast made. The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season ; Thou art the confidence of all the ends of the earth ; to Thee all flesh comes. May Thy Spirit bring to our mind Thy loving-kindnesses which have been ever of old, that, knowing Thy name as the dwelling-place of Thy people in all generations, we also may put our trust in Thee, for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee. May He reveal to us the forgiving mercy and the ungrudging liberality of Thy nature, that we may feel a full and implicit trust in Thee for the supply of every want of our souls, bodies, and spirits. May He specially reveal to us that great gift of Thine wherein Thou hast fully revealed Thy nature and Thy mind towards us. "If when we were enemies, we were recon-

ciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Thou hast not called us to forsake us, but Thou art faithful; Thy gifts and calling are without repentance. Thou hast given us Thy Son as the great foundation and earnest and treasury of eternal and unbounded provision.

If any of us are tried in the matters of this life, teach us that as Thou hast given us the true Bread from heaven, much more wilt Thou give us daily bread.

XXI

O LORD, who knowest all the difficulties we meet when we strive to raise our thoughts to Thee, who knowest our common inability for Thy worship, and the special hindrances of our several characters and positions, grant that these may now be overcome. We thank Thee that we know that Thou art to be trusted wholly and eternally, that in Thee we find rest and refuge, a sure dwelling-place; that we know there is sure hope for those who come to Thee of deliverance from all evil and entrance into all blessedness and enjoyment of Thee.

For all that we know of Thee we praise Thee, for according to Thy name so is Thy praise. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head

above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might, and in Thine hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all.

We thank Thee for Thy goodness in making us capable of becoming Thy children; and for Him who has redeemed us and shown us the path of life.

We acknowledge that the better life we have known to be our duty we have not continuously striven to rise to, we have let our efforts be slackened by trivial, frivolous occupations, by reckless exposure to hostile influences, by ardent attachment to worldly ends and eager engagement in their pursuit.

Let not our hearts harden. Suffer us not to succeed in our efforts to make sin seem a slight thing. Let us not be deceived by any appearance of good results from our sin. Let us not hasten past our sins, shrinking from humbling ourselves before Thee, and becoming more deeply indebted to Thee. O Lord, in this matter of sin which does so weaken and blind the faculties of our souls do Thou aid us. Thou who seest to the end of all difficulty, who canst reach to the root of all ill, do thou heal, disentangle, enlighten, deliver us.

May Thy Spirit work in us a more real dependence on Jesus Christ; a more genuine, grateful, and fruitful repentance, a true contentment as Thy servants, more glad and hearty approval of Thy will.

XXII

We thank Thee for hours of worship. May strength flow from them into our hours of labour. May we come into living contact with that which can uphold and guide us. Give us to believe that whatever our purpose and desire of profiting may be, Thine is infinitely greater that we shall profit.

We seek to grow in the knowledge of Thee, and yet we do not grow; we seek to be convinced of the reality of things unseen, of Thy nearness, of Thy love, of Thy power to interfere in our life, and yet we are not. Lord, if we are blind open our eyes that we may see. Have pity upon us and so deal with us that all doubt shall be dispelled. If we do not accurately apprehend our own spiritual state, and are unable to detail to Thee our wants, may we receive from Thee increased light. If we feel that our apprehensions of Thee are very slight, and that amidst many manifestations of Thy kindness we still maintain a thankless and cold-hearted disposition, be pleased graciously to overcome our coldness and blindness. So bless us that we cannot but recognise a Divine bounty, a supernatural influence, and learn to expect more, and what to expect.

We seek above all else to learn to love Thee; we feel that if our religion does not give us this it is vain and empty of that which we chiefly desire. And help us, Lord, we beseech Thee, to sincerity and thorough-

ness in self-surrender. May we give up our own will, and be ruled by Thee; may we seek no longer our own things, but the things that are Christ's.

We thank Thee that progress is the law in all Thy works, that out of imperfect things Thou bringest what is perfect, and carriest all things forward to what is higher and better. Grant that those matters which depend on human will and human efforts may also improve, that destitution, vice, and enmities may come to an end, and that the kingdom of God may come.

XXIII

O God, we thank Thee for this life, with all its joys, its opportunities, its discipline. But we could scarcely thank Thee for this life had we no hope of a better in which all we have learnt may be used, and in which all we have here loved may be fully enjoyed. Our motives are here so mixed; we are tossed between consciousness of our own weakness and trust in Thy strength; between aspiration after an ideal life and eager pursuit of self-interest and pleasures. Grant us, we beseech Thee, a revival of interest in spiritual things, a renewed openness to impressions that tend to godly living. Increase our faith and give us a more lively apprehension of the reality of things unseen, a firmer assurance that life is not a vain and fruitless

spending of time, that there is a purpose in it the attainment of which will justify all toil and sacrifice and thought and feeling. Help us to recognise and earnestly to desire the blessings Thou art most ready to bestow. Bring our wills into conformity with Thine.

May each of us be striving, in the secrecy of our own spirit, to subdue pride, to walk humbly with Thee, to seek Thy grace to conform to Thy will. Let us not be dismayed though it take long to wear out the strength and stain of sin. Let no past sins entirely overwhelm us now, no foolishness, no obstinacy, no selfishness, no grossness, no pride, no vanity, no cold-heartedness; let nothing we have done amiss sever us from Thee, and prevent us from receiving Thy favour and becoming like to Thee.

We thank Thee that Thy greatness does not separate Thee from Thy creatures, but makes Thee more their own. Thou hast said that we glorify Thee when we call upon Thee in the day of trouble, and we believe that all trouble is known to Thee and will be guided by Thee to issues that Thou wilt bless. Make us strong in faith, believing that Thou art with us, sufficient for all our hourly need. Rebuke our fears—may we feel that in Thee and in Thy presence is fulness of joy, and that Thou goest with us, caring most for the weakest who can least stand alone. May we go on our way leaning upon Thee, striving to serve our fellows and to fulfil Thy holy will in all things.

XXIV

O THOU who art the source of all gracious influences that can effectually help us, and without whom we cannot hope to live on, and to live happily, do Thou be gracious to us, and leave us not in the power of those things to which we have recklessly and ignorantly given ourselves. In Thee do we hope—in that unchanging goodness of Thine which seeks to abolish evil wherever it is, in us or in others, and which strives always to bring all things to a more perfect state. We believe in Thy love, which cannot weary or die out, which loves us even as we are, and has followed us even in our lost estate, and has moved Thee to send Thy Son as the Way back to Thee. What He has taught us of Thy love and care for sinners we seek to receive.

We are ashamed of our perversity—that we are so little capable of being touched by Thy love or impressed by Thy greatness. May we hold in our minds the contrast between our own lives and that of Christ, till shame deepens into repentance and repentance transforms us into His likeness. Show us what our life, with all its fixed circumstances, might become were we of His spirit, knowing that as we grow in love we grow in likeness to Him who though He was rich yet for our sakes

became poor. Help us to consider more sincerely and more fully the wants of others. May we prefer others to ourselves, and seek to bring all their wants and interests to Thee our Father in heaven.

We are ashamed that we have accomplished so little. We have thought about our relation to Christ, have spoken much about His service, but we have done little. We have seen the pitiable condition of many of our fellows, have bewailed it, but have done little to alter it; few have been the better for us.

Neither has our life been such as to attract men to Christ. We have not reproduced His meekness, His wisdom, His unselfish devotion, His unworldliness.

But we come unto Thee who art the God of all grace, and who art more willing to give than we to receive. We believe that Thou canst perfect that which concerneth us and work in us that which is well pleasing in Thy sight.

XXV

We seek to come to Thee in the spirit of this day—as children of the Resurrection, who have been begotten again to a lively hope. Help us to live

remembering, and loving to remember, Him who died for us and who rose again. May this be to us a day of brightness, of calmness, of joy, of humiliation, of contrition, of holy purpose. We seek to worship Thee in simplicity through Jesus Christ, accepting Him as the image of the Invisible God, the true revealer of Thee the Father. May we enter into that real communion with Him by which we become members of Christ. May we feel this unity to be most real—a unity whose root is love, and therefore the best, which is eternal, and identifies us in all things with Him. Enable us to realise some of the great things which are given to us in this union—the encouragement of knowing we are loved, of being accompanied through life by One who knows the way, and who has Himself triumphed, who lived His life in evidence that the best things can be obtained. Especially He had a life in direct communication with Thee the Father; and this He gives to us—a life forgiven, at peace, an energetic and hopeful fulfilment of God's will.

We desire truly to consecrate ourselves to Thee. Put that heart within us which shall make this true, necessary, abiding.

When disheartened by our own guilt and weakness may we find consolation and renewal in Thee, and may we be enabled to believe that we can be as truly nourished by Christ's life as each member is

by the life of the body. And as He embraced all men in His love, and could leave none outside, so may we be emptied of self and filled with love to Thee and to our fellow-men, doing good to all as we have opportunity. In all that we purpose may we set Thee before us, and give us the assurance that all our plans are well-pleasing in Thy sight.

XXVI

We worship Thee, O God, who hast revealed Thyself to us in Christ Jesus. We thank Thee that He has come to show us that it is eternal life to know Thee the Father, and to trust Thee even as He trusted Thee. We thank Thee that He came to lift us up into the fellowship of His own filial knowledge of Thee and trust in Thee, and to show us Thine eternal purpose of good towards sinners of mankind. He has said "Whoso hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and we would be sharers in the blessedness of those who have not seen yet have believed, who can say from the heart, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Give us the joy of those who are conscious they have found and need never more lose perfect love and perfect goodness. May we be carried out of ourselves by the vision of Christ, and may we

be enabled to give ourselves into His keeping, that our sins may not prevail against us.

There is much that separates us from Thee, much that persuades us we are not Thine, much that saddens, bewilders, and weakens us. Lord, teach us to pray; give us that gift of faith by which alone we can have the vision of Jesus Christ or can live to Thee. May our prayers be more real; give us the beginning of all true prayer, a sincere willingness to be made holy, to be loosed from sin, and to accept all the responsibilities and arduousness of the spiritual life. Help us in all that concerns the maintenance of our spiritual life. May our knowledge of Divine things be more true. Give us clearer views, deeper convictions, more steadfast purpose.

May our lives be increasingly devoted to ends that justify themselves in our reason and conscience. Instead of striving for what is beyond our reach, may we learn to appreciate and to desire what Thou hast put within our reach. May it at all times be our chief satisfaction that opportunity is given us to promote the good of men. May we see where it is possible to alleviate pain, to relieve poverty, to repress vice, to sow the seeds of permanent happiness in one or two lives.

XXVII

We thank Thee for Thy goodness in sending us One in whom we are complete, in whom all our wants are satisfied, our sins forgiven. We thank Thee that things are ordered for our good; that the result of all is to justify Thy wisdom and love; that though on the way many things happen to us that are hard to bear and difficult to understand, the end of all i to be perfect victory, perfect peace, perfect joy. For all the schooling of this life we thank Thee, and we pray that all our experience may lead us to a deeper penitence, a more entire and trustful reliance upon Thee. We know that were all our desires gratified, and all our views of our own need met we should still be imperfect. But Thou seest all and desirest our perfection. May we feel how safe and blessed we are in Thy keeping and under Thy government. And may we eagerly accept Thy government as that expression of Thy will by which Thou wouldst lead us to the highest good. We desire to renounce all other lords that have had dominion over us, and to live by Thy rule only.

Give us a discerning and sensitive conscience. Deliver us from what we feel to be unsatisfactory, wrong, and dangerous in our spiritual condition. Help us to master and use rightly those elements

in our circumstances which tend to lower our spiritual tone. May no difficulty we meet in trying to eradicate evil slacken our efforts, but may it rather show us the urgent need there is of more determined and constant endeavour. We feel deeply our helplessness in dealing with sin. May our fellowship with Jesus Christ be more real and more constant. May He be that One who has most influence with us. May we never forget or lose sight of what we have in Him. Give us the aid of Thy Spirit, that we may understand more of His purposes in the world and may be enabled to further them. Help us to see that Thou hast a work for each of us, and that in all that Thou givest us to do Thou art ready to give us strength, and wisdom and all that is necessary in the doing of it.

XXVIII

O God, we thank Thee for all the joys of life. Suffer us not to think that these are passing or delusive, but enable us to accept them as foretastes of higher joys to come, as indications of our capacity for happiness and of Thy power to give us happiness.

Give us grace to believe that in Thy service is the only true liberty of Thy creatures, their only happiness and wisdom. Even when conscious that

we have unfitted ourselves for Thy work, that we are indeed dead in trespasses and sins—yet we believe that thou canst vitalise us, bringing us to that real faith in Christ and reliance on Him which will make our life one with His life. Help us so to surrender ourselves to Him that we may understand what it means to have "Christ dwelling in our heart by faith," and may be able at last to say, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

May we be really one with Christ, not in name only but in love. And as His life was shaped by His love for us and union with us, so may ours be lived in conformity with His blessed life. May we be enabled to believe that we can be as truly nourished by Christ's life as each member is by the life of the body.

And as He embraced all men in His love, and could leave none outside, so may we be emptied of self, and filled with love to our fellow-men, doing good to all as we have opportunity. May we be moved to more earnest desire that Thy name may be known among those who know Thee not, that the great love wherewith Thou hast loved mankind may be made known, even in the dark places of the earth.

May those who are called to anxieties and hard-

ships find in their lot compensating advantages to character.

May their diminished share of the good and gladness of this life lead them to make more of the spiritual inheritance of Thy children, and of the joy and strength which are its earnests.

XXIX

O GOD, we thank Thee that Thou hast revealed Thyself to us in Christ Jesus, that in Him Thou comest nigh to us. We are ashamed that Thou having done so much for us, and so lavishly and ungrudgingly sacrificed for us, we should have been so backward, so timorous, so irresponsive. Forgive our foolishness, our carelessness about Thy purpose, our unfaithfulness to Thy interests.

We come to Thee seeking renewal and increased strength. Suffer us not to lose the joy of Thy salvation and to find that, like so much else, it is a disappointment. Lead us clear of all self-deception and dulness of understanding. May we recognise the requirements, the aims, the scope, the aids, of the Christian life; may the faith and religion of Christ take firmer hold of us; may our minds be more satisfied, our feelings more entirely engaged, our lives more absolutely devoted.

We thank Thee that in a world in which there is much that is mysterious there is much also that is plain, that enough is given to help us to believe that Thou rulest and that the hope of the world lies in being ruled by Thee. We desire to do what we can towards this end by submitting ourselves to Thy rule. We need the faith that overcomes the world, that enables us to be in it, but not of it; to use it for worthy ends, not to be carried away by its fashions and excitements.

May our hearts be so wholly won by Christ that it shall be our joy to serve Him even in circumstances not in themselves joyful. May a true and wise zeal possess our spirits.

May those who labour for Thee find that Thou sendest none a-warring on his own charges, but that Thy grace is sufficient for their needs and for the needs of the whole world. And may Thy spirit show to each of us that to every one who seeks to do Thy will in the smallest service of Thy vineyard there will be the sure reward of sharing in the joy of the harvest.

XXX

We thank Thee, O God, for all the great names by which Thou hast revealed Thyself to us—that Thou, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the

everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, hast said Thou wilt be with us in our frailty, our poverty, our emptiness. We thank Thee that Thou hast encouraged us to trust in Thee as *our* God, to believe that Thy wisdom is ours to watch over us, finding out ways to do us good; that Thy power is ours to deliver us out of temptation and to defend us in all danger spiritual and temporal, and to subdue our enemies under us; that Thy providence watches over us, turning all things to our good, and directing our whole life for our greatest happiness, to bring us to heaven and holiness and to Thyself, in spite of the devil and our own corruptions; that Thy mercy and love will never forsake us and are stronger than all that can be against us.

We need more real feeling, more certainty of faith, an inward unquestioning persuasion of the reality of our connection with Thee, through our perception of Thy goodness, our devotion to Thy purposes, our humble acceptance of Thy love.

Sometimes we feel as if our religion were hollow. Remove our doubts, we beseech Thee. Forbid that we should fight against the laws of our nature and seek happiness where it is not. In Thy purpose is our hope. Enlarge our thoughts of Thee and of Thy purposes, and may those things engage our attention more really which we see to be in the line of Thy will. Give us light, and give us resolution to

follow wherever it may lead us. Save us from making our own comfort a chief aim in life. May we be quickened to use for the best ends the influence Thou hast given us. Suffer us not to weary in well-doing. Save us from finding hollowness in our own hearts and monotony and weariness in our lives. May we have within ourselves Thy presence as a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

XXXI

We are ashamed when we compare the love we bear to Christ with the reasons there are for loving Him. We have not acted towards Him as we ought, because we have forgotten that indeed He is our hope, that without Him it had been better for us never to have been ; we have forgotten whence, and to what, and at what a cost we have been redeemed, have forgotten that we sat in darkness and the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons. And, therefore, we have not sacrificed the sacrifices of thanksgiving to Him who has set the prisoners free, breaking the gates of brass and cutting the bars of iron asunder. We have been inconsiderate, unthoughtful about Christ, and therefore unloving. O Lord, help us out of our deadness. Give us sympathy with and a deep, lasting,

and fruitful gratitude to our Redeemer. Let not the dreams or realities of life crowd out of our hearts the great fact of our redemption. Let things take possession of our minds in proportion to their real importance. Make us wise and observant of the things that occur, spiritual and temporal, around us and in us, that we may understand the loving-kindness of all Thy dealings towards us.

In no case let us be betrayed into contentment with a worldly, selfish, easy life. Make us serious in temper, sedulous in duty, keenly alive to Thy displeasure. May pure aspirations and high aims never depart from our minds. May the image of Christ at all times stand before us.

We lament our past uselessness : we have sought to better ourselves and have not "considered the poor," have not spent thought on those whom some sacrifice or effort might have aided. In some cases we see how we could do good ; give us courage to do it, and perseverance in carrying it on. In some cases we see much need, but know not how to relieve ; often we fail through lack of knowledge, of practical ability. Help us by Thy wisdom and Thy power and send the help Thou seest needful.

Grant calmness and fixedness of heart to those that are distracted with many cares, thankfulness to the afflicted, liveliness and spirituality to the heartless and dead.

XXXII

We thank Thee for forgiveness, that by a word, for the asking, without toil, without penance on our part, we can be forgiven. We thank Thee that Thy wisdom and mercy have devised a way of escape for us guilty sinners, and that in Christ Jesus we can come to Thee as the just God and the justifier of the ungodly. Give us a clearer knowledge of our sin. Illuminate our minds by a sight of what our lives would be if we set Thee always before us. Our best righteousnesses are as filthy rags; we are conscious of self in our holiest acts; our best actions are stained with vanity and love of applause. We recall words we could not have spoken had we remembered Thy presence, a behaviour we could not have adopted had we recognised ourselves as called to the kingdom and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we have been feeling remote, may we be drawn near; if we are slothful, indifferent, may we be quickened; if allowing ourselves in weakening indulgences, give us strength to resist. Save us, we beseech Thee, from great sins, from the beginnings of evil, from false steps, and unconscientious practices. May we be thorough, sincere, earnest in our pursuit of holiness. We have not been sufficiently concerned about growth in character to make sure that we are growing, or even that the methods we rely on are

likely to help. We have been little concerned to be more profitable. Year by year goes by, and little is accomplished. Our energies are wasted, we fear to act independently, to initiate a new style of living. We are ruled by the opinion of the world.

When changing circumstances and new periods of life bring novel temptations, help us to recognise and resist them. When our minds are dull and visited by no inspiring thoughts, do Thou graciously remember us and visit us with the inspiration of Thy spirit.

XXXIII

THOU coverest with Thy Divine presence and power the whole of our being, and in everything that we are connected with we would own Thy rule and government. Thou hast brought us to the close of another year—a year of Divine love, of pardoning mercy, of gracious guidance. We rejoice that Thou art with us through all our years, through all changes—with us to forgive, to encourage, to aid. Help us to leave behind us the sins and faults that have marred our life hitherto. Across this line may no evil thing pass. May we without regret bid farewell to unlawful and lowering pleasures, to unrighteous and selfish gain. May the coming years show more decision in our

Christian life, a more zealous purpose to redeem the time, a wiser outlay of our strength.

We thank Thee for positions of usefulness and opportunities of doing good and being of service, for the accomplishment of our righteous desires, and for the thwarting of those that were unwise or evil, for the infinite prospect of good laid open to us in Thy promises.

We thank Thee for all Thou hast entrusted us with, for the comforts and pleasures of life, for congenial friends, surroundings, and occupations. Above all, we thank Thee that, for us and for others, Thou hast a purpose of good, that for us there is a Saviour who has loved us and given Himself for us.

When changing circumstances and new periods of life bring novel temptations, help us to recognise and resist them. If we feel that our circumstances require of us duties we are little able to perform and present us with opportunities we are unable fully to take advantage of—when we begin to slacken all efforts to be and to do good, and turn with distaste from all that is not pleasing to the flesh, do Thou graciously remember our frailty and revive us with the influence of Thy Spirit. May our hope never die; may we never feel as if no new period could bring us any good. The things we fear do Thou graciously avert. O God, may highly-prized lives be spared yet awhile.

We pray for all who are in distress and trouble of any kind. Enable them to cast their care upon Thee, and to find comfort in the knowledge that Thou, their Father, lovest them and art caring for them.

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